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Elkanah Watson's Activities on Behalf of Agriculture
Hugh M. Flick 193

Populism Up-to-Date: The Story of the Farmers' Union
William P. Tucker 198

The Agricultural Regionalism of the Trans-Mississippi West as Delineated by Cyrus Thomas
James C. Malin 208

The Cattle Herds and Ranches of the Oregon Country, 1860–1890
J. Orin Oliphant 217

South Dakota's Rural Credit System: A Venture in State Socialism, 1917–1946
Gilbert C. Fite 239

The Agricultural Revolution in Royal Georgia, 1752–1775
Willard Range 250

News Notes and Comments 256

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AGRICULTURAL HISTORY

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ELKANAH WATSON'S ACTIVITIES ON BEHALF OF AGRICULTURE

HUGH M. FLICK

Division of Archives and History, State Education Department, Albany, New York

Elkanah Watson (1758–1842) was a man of destiny.[1] In his amended Journal he observed:

> I have been infected from early life, with a species of desease—If I may be permitted so to call it, for nearly half a century in burying my mind in America's future glory, thus imbibing an anxious wish to contribute to its destiny in my day and generation, by the exertions of all the humble talents GOD has been pleased to *lend* me; and always under the impression that I was created for the express purpose—I have most willingly resigned myself blindfold, to my destiny; and have invariably been governed by some new impulse, in bringing my last project to a successful result.
>
> I have generally succeeded in the fifth year, in the most difficult, by a peculiar spirit of perseverance and habitual industry; in baring down opposition—and prostrating the venemous shafts of ridicule in the offset—always the most animated, and determined in proportion to the magnitude of the prize in view,—and the obstacles which crossed my paths—for the most part especially in establishing the Canal Policy in the state of New York—and founding Agricultural Societies in my native state on a plan altogether original, I generally stood alone for the first two or three years—a target to be riddled by blockheads, and fools. My greatest efforts rested on those great leading features of my life.[2]

That Watson enjoyed this process of self analysis is evident from a letter he wrote to his sister, Mrs. Priscilla Cotton, on May 5, 1827:

> I ride all my hobbies at a hard trot to a certain point and then wieried with my own efforts I dismount and leave others to catch the bird. Such has been my destiny for nearly 40 years—altho' posterity may be benefited by this irresistible propensity—yet it has been far otherwise with me individually.

Watson rarely benefited from his public promotions and invariably went out of his way to demonstrate his disinterestedness. In Albany for instance, where there was an unusually violent series of land booms, Watson refused to speculate, even though land speculation was one of his principal sources of income. He did not wish to have his projects for civic improvement slandered on the ground that he was doing it for personal gain. This attitude was characteristic of all his public promotions. It is true that he often gained as an indirect result, such as the general rise in the value of his landholdings in western and northern New York, which followed his efforts to improve means of transportation. In this, however, he was on an equal footing with others and derived no special advantage beyond his complete confidence in the beneficial effect of his labors. Few men of his time or any other time have worked with more unselfish zeal for the interests and improvements of their country. This is especially true in his efforts in the field of agriculture. He never received any direct or indirect material return for the time and cash which he expended in the improvement of the agricultural economy of the country.

Watson's reward, which he considered more than ample, was the praise he received from the political and agricultural leaders of America. Men like Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe wrote to him in glowing and complimentary terms; men eminent in agriculture such as Judge Richard Peters, Henry Colman, and Jesse Buel sought his advice not only in regard to the organization of agricultural societies but on matters of practical farming. Converts like these paying tribute to his reputation was balm to Watson's soul and an inspiration for greater efforts. He asked no more than praise and appreciation and the unchallenged reputation of a successful and patriotic promoter of public projects. These sentiments were tinged with a touch of the martyr complex and although praise was essential if it was seasoned with persecution it was sweeter, especially in retrospect.

Watson's contribution to the agriculture of his time may be classified into four general categories: first, his organization, development, and encour-

[1] This article was read at the meeting of the Agricultural History Society with the American Historical Association in New York City on Dec. 30, 1946. It is a summary of portions of an unpublished monograph by the writer on Watson and his career.

[2] This Journal as well as the letters and other records accumulated by Watson are on deposit in the Division of Archives and History, State Education Department, Albany, New York.

agement of county agricultural societies; second, his efforts to secure State and Federal legislation for the encouragement and support of agriculture in general and agricultural societies in particular; third, his contribution through practical experimentation on the cultivation of new crops and the amelioration of domestic animals; and fourth, his indirect efforts to improve the lot of the farmer through better transportation which opened up new lands for settlement and gave easier access to markets. In each case the ultimate aim was the development of an independent America, free of debt to the Old World, and self-sufficient in her own right. Closely related with his thinking on agriculture was the development and encouragement of domestic manufactures. This was to be accomplished through household industry as well as commercial ventures. There was nothing in which America could not excel, and all that was needed was someone to lead the way. Destiny, according to Watson's thinking, had selected him to spread the gospel, and he gladly accepted the challenge.

A brief discussion of each of the four points mentioned above will serve to illustrate the type and extent of the contributions which Elkanah Watson made to the agriculture of his time. It should also serve to demonstrate certain of his characteristics which both helped and hindered his promotions. Although these phases of his life will be presented as analytical portraits hanging on the taut line of his experience, it should be borne in mind that the background of each had many points in common and were closely related.

County Agricultural Societies. In the spring of 1807 Watson purchased the "elegant seat of Henry Van Schaick," a mile from Pittsfield, Massachusetts. His removal from Albany had been prompted by his active participation in the bitter political campaign for the governorship of New York in the winter of 1806–07, in which his candidate had lost the election and Watson was poorer by some $500 as the result of a wager on the outcome. His arrival at his new estate, however, had the appearance of a conquering hero rather than a vanquished politician. The farm, or more properly the estate which contained about 250 acres, was a suitable setting for a gentleman farmer. It was, Watson observed, in a "high state of improvement, abounding with excellent fruit," and with "convenient and elegant buildings" as well as "a circular pond of twenty acres." Watson had been a member of the formal and paternalistic New York Society for the Promotion of Agriculture, Arts, and Manufactures, which expired by limitation in May 1804, and its successor the Society for the Promotion of Useful Arts, organized in April 1804. He was on intimate terms with the great landowners of the Hudson Valley, the Livingstons and the Clintons, as well as men like John Jay, James Duane, Samuel Latham Mitchill, and David Hosack. He had listened to learned papers at the annual meetings of the society. It had become fashionable to show an interest in agriculture, and among politicians there was the growing realization that the number of farm votes was increasing each year.

Watson being familiar with the publications and discussions of this society which had preached the diversification of crops, the introduction and cultivation of new and unusual crops, and the fostering of purebred farm animals, it is not surprising that he should have sought to follow the example of his friend, Chancellor Livingston, and establish himself as a patron of agriculture. Indeed, knowing Watson's character it would have been strange if he had not, especially as he was endowed with a speculative spirit which gave urge to test every new theory, to try every new crop, and to use every new invention. It was also in keeping that he should publish the results of his experiments and urge others to adopt those which had proved beneficial. He carried this spirit one step farther and was not content with following the lead of others but branched out on his own ventures.

From early youth Watson had manifested an insatiable desire to be a pioneer in his activities. He took great pride in being the first to achieve a given objective, whether it was in the field of prophecy or in actual doing. It was to be expected, therefore, that when he took up the cause of agriculture he should cast about for new and untried paths. A few months after his arrival in Berkshire County he procured from Chancellor Livingston a pair of Merino sheep, which were the first to appear in the county, and he added, "if not in the state." He was proud of these sheep and anxious for others to see them. Accordingly he announced that he would have them on exhibition in the town square of Pittsfield. "Many farmers, and even women," reported Watson, "were excited by curiosity to attend this first novel, and humble exhibition." Encouraged

and excited by his success Watson conceived the idea of a larger fair sponsored and managed by an organization of farmers. The plan appealed to him. It was new and novel. It was patriotic, especially in the light of the rising war clouds. It had infinite possibilities and if successful might prove the pattern which would sweep the country. It was another first to add to his list.

It took considerable promoting to put the idea over with the rather suspicious farmers of Berkshire, but Watson had become accustomed to handling the opposition. The first organized fair was held in October 1810, and the following winter the Berkshire County Agricultural Society was incorporated. Watson had judged his field well. The society and its annual exhibitions were not only popular in the county but also attracted wide public attention. Watson was the founder and first president, a title which he thought so much of that he used it as the lead line in the epitaph which he wrote for himself.

The plan for a county agricultural society and annual farmers' holiday proved amazingly popular. By 1820 Watson reported that agricultural societies had been formed in all New England counties with the single exception of those of Rhode Island. In New York nearly all the counties had formed societies with financial aid from the State, and societies were being formed in North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Kentucky, Ohio, and "even the new state of Illinois—all on the Berkshire plan." Watson had succeeded in blending practical utility with what he termed "innocent frivolity" in a formula which enlisted the support of all elements of the community. "Some eclat was necessary," he wrote, "music, dancing, and singing, intermixed with religious exercises, and measures of solidity, so as to meet the feelings of every class of the community, and keeping a fixed eye on the main object, all tend to the same great end, promoting agriculture, and domestic manufactures." A liberal application of this formula would weight the scales on the side of success in any project.

Imbued with a deep sense of the national importance of these societies and fired by his own missionary zeal, Watson expended much time and effort in encouraging the formation of agricultural societies. His correspondence grew so heavy that he could no longer handle it, and he determined to publish a volume setting forth his views, experience, and advice. This pamphlet was distributed throughout the United States at his own expense. It contributed to the spread of agricultural societies on the Berkshire system, but contrary to his expectations it vastly increased his load of correspondence. Fortunately for Watson most of the letters he received were thank-you notes and did not necessarily require an answer, but even with this, the load was heavy. The following year he brought out a slightly amended second edition which was combined with his history of the western canals in New York. An edition of 1,000 copies was printed and once more widely distributed, this time to libraries in Canada as well as the United States. Without doubt the volume was extensively read, and if the letters which Watson received may be taken as an indication it was highly regarded and used as a guide in the formation of agricultural societies.

Watson banked heavily on arousing the spirit of competition and pride in family, community, State, and Nation. He took special pains to stress the importance of including the ladies in the annual exhibitions through offering premiums for domestic manufactures, fruits, flowers, clothing, and works of art. In practically every one of his public addresses he dedicated a portion of his thoughts directly to the good ladies of the community. He considered their support not only essential to the success of the fair but also as a moral influence and check on drunkenness and rowdyism. He urged that premiums be given in silver plate rather than cash and that artistically engraved diplomas and certificates of merit be presented to the members and premium winners. All these features contributed to the popular acceptance of the program and all directly or indirectly benefited the farmer and raised him in his own esteem as well as that of the urban portion of the population. The county fair which became an American institution has supplied a necessary outlet to the farmer and a source of real education to the cities. On this point alone Watson's contribution to the agriculture of his day was substantial even though it did not reach the heights he had envisioned.

Agricultural Legislation. Although Watson believed that the county societies were the foundation upon which agricultural prosperity and progress would be built, he was also convinced that the keystone of the arch was a strong centralized program of State and Federal boards for the coordination and encouragement of all agricul-

tural activities. In the early days of the Berkshire society he had exerted every effort to secure State support and financial aid. Men like John Adams warned him that his efforts were in vain, but persistence and the outstanding success of his experiment finally won the day. In 1817, a year after Watson had returned to New York State, the legislature of Massachusetts appropriated funds to assist county societies in offering premiums. This was encouraging, and Watson transferred his efforts to the legislature of New York. By the fall of 1818 several counties in New York had organized societies on the Berkshire plan, and others were contemplating similar action. Watson remembered the struggle which he had had in begging sufficient funds to offer attractive premiums during the early days of his experiment in Berkshire, and he reasoned that the program could be greatly accelerated under State patronage. He succeeded in having a joint committee of the legislature of New York appointed "for the consideration of such measures as, in their opinion, will best comport with the enlightened views of the legislature, to cherish the great science of agriculture, and foster domestic manufactures." At the request of the committee Watson prepared the rough draft of the report which was submitted in February 1818. The report recommended that "a Board of agriculture be established at the seat of government, to consist of a professor of agriculture and chemistry; and one member from each great district." This was progress but no official action was taken.

In 1819 Governor DeWitt Clinton, in his message to the legislature, gave the proposal strong support, and Watson's one-man lobby undoubtedly contributed to both the framing of the bill and its final passage. It provided for an annual appropriation of $10,000 which was to be apportioned among the county societies on the basis of population. State aid, however, was only to be given to those societies which had raised an equivalent amount by local subscription. The combined sum had to be earmarked for premiums. The law stipulated that the officers of the county societies should be *practical farmers* and that the ex-presidents should constitute a State board of agriculture. This board was to receive and examine reports of all premiums granted, the most valuable of which were to be incorporated in an annual volume to be distributed to the county societies and "the good people of the State." The volume was limited to an edition of 1,500 copies. Watson was disappointed that the law did not include all the features which Governor Clinton had recommended, expecially Watson's pet projects, a pattern farm and a State agricultural society, but he considered it a good beginning.

The law was no sooner on the statute books than Watson started a campaign to establish an agricultural society in every county in New York State. He dispatched his 80-page history to each county. He sent circulars outlining the provisions of the law and stressing the importance of organizing a society so that they might share in the State appropriation. Indeed he took upon himself all the duties of the State board of agriculture until such time as that board might be organized, with the optimistic hope that his actual expenses might be repaid. An indication of the success of this campaign may be seen in the fact that all but seven counties in the State drew their share of the $10,000. The law, however, had its enemies, and there were many who believed that farmers should be allowed to handle their own affairs in their own way without State interference. These antis were well organized, and each year carried on a vigorous fight for the repeal of the law. Watson was not only its main supporter but also the principal object of attack. He was often mentioned and ridiculed in legislative debates, but he continued successfully to prevent repeal until the law expired by limitation in 1825. This was a real contribution as it kept the county societies alive and supplied the beginning of all the manifold activities which the State later supported in the name of agriculture. Watson was unable to arouse sufficient interest to secure the passage of a new law, but the interest he had developed did not die and was renewed in 1832 with the farmers' convention in Albany. From that time on there was a steady growth in the development of State aid to agriculture.

Like many of Watson's promotions his plan for a pattern farm was not original with him, but his conception of the details of its operation foreshadowed the later development of the State experiment station and agricultural college. The idea was practical but it was too far ahead of the times. His plan embraced experimental work, under a professor of agriculture, on everything which related to farms and farming. Twenty young men from different parts of the State were to be in residence each year and were to be in-

structed in chemistry, horticulture, botany, and mineralogy. He also insisted that these students must engage in dirt farming at least three hours each day. The plan was pushed with much vigor but never received much support.

The pivot of Watson's agricultural structure was the creation of a department of agriculture in the Federal Government. As early as 1816 he petitioned Congress through his Representative urging that a national board of agriculture should be established. In later years he pressed his plan with the political and agricultural leaders of America. There was almost universal agreement on the beneficial effects of such a plan, but there was equal agreement that the establishment of a national board would require a constitutional amendment. If that was the stumbling block, Watson answered that the obvious thing to do was to procure an amendment, but no one seemed willing to start the ball rolling. His ideas were sound, but it was twenty years before Congress ventured into the field. Once more it would seem that Watson was born too soon. Although he was unable to make his agricultural legislation stick, his labors undoubtedly helped to clear the way for another generation and ripened the public mind through his persistent agitation.

Practical Experimentation. Watson was not a dirt farmer, and he never really understood farmers' problems. There was more powder than hayseed in his hair. His experiments in the field of agriculture had more the air of a benefactor and promoter of public projects than it did of actual farming. This attitude did not, however, preclude him from being eminently useful. His most practical contribution was his procuring and distributing new varieties of seeds and plants. In 1817 he sent a circular letter to most of the consuls of the United States stationed in Europe, and the following year he received a rather extensive variety of foreign seeds. His best contact was the American consul at Valencia, Spain. Watson persuaded him to employ an eminent Spanish botanist to examine approximately 100 varieties of grain from which he selected 14 kinds of wheat, 1 of oats, and 1 of barley. These were placed in 16 bags of 4 quarts each and sealed in a cask and sent to Watson through the Collector of the Port of New York. Samples of these varieties were widely distributed not only in New York State but also in other parts of the country. A portion of the seeds were given to the Shakers near Albany with the understanding that if they could be successfully cultivated a substantial portion of the resulting product would be returned to the State Board of Agriculture for further distribution. Watson mentioned this experiment in his history of the Berkshire Agricultural Society, and James Madison, then president of the Albemarle Agricultural Society in Virginia, made reference to it in his presidential address. This address was published in the *American Farmer* and according to Watson "produced great excitement in all directions, especially in the South." The real point of interest seems to have been the claims that the new wheat could successfully withstand the attacks of the Hessian fly. In some sections this wheat was even called "Watson wheat." By 1824 No. 2 Red Flint wheat was the prevailing wheat in many New York counties while No. 2 White Flint wheat was the leading crop in several others. Both of these wheats had been part of Watson's original distribution. Watson had hoped that he would be able to carry this distribution further and include domestic animals and farm implements, but his inability to find financial support and transportation stalled the plan.

Watson's practical experiments were not limited to seed distribution. In Pittsfield in addition to Merino sheep he had introduced the cultivation of madder and woad in an effort to overcome the shortage of dyestuffs caused by the war with England. He purchased and presented to the town of Pittsfield an English grass-fed boar in the hope of improving the quality of the swine. While living at Port Kent on Lake Champlain he tried a similar experiment with pigs which had been imported from the East Indies, which he called Indian pigs for lack of a better name. Also at Port Kent he maintained an experimental farm of 15 acres on which he demonstrated that the pine barrens if carefully cultivated could produce as good crops as any lands in northern New York. Watson was constantly sending to the papers information he had gleaned from others on such subjects as the use of manures, salt, and plaster, how to keep the crows from eating corn, and how to make and preserve good cider. He was an excellent loud speaker and sounding board and always felt that it was his public duty to publish any useful information which might come his way, either through his own experience or through the experiments of others. If such information was

not appreciated it was not his fault. He had done his bit, and that was important to Elkanah Watson.

Transportation. Watson never fully appreciated the extent to which his promotions for better transportation directly affected the life and work of the farmer. As a successful land speculator he fully realized the importance of opening lines of communications and that the better the means of transportation the sooner wilderness lands would be settled. As a man of commerce he saw the advantage of cheap transportation to both the producer and the merchant, but he never understood the real significance of the fact that good roads make good farmers. And yet Watson's labors for canals, turnpikes, and finally railroads indirectly meant more to the farmers of New York and the Great Lakes region than even his favorite hobby, agricultural societies.

Watson could compute the reduced transportation cost of a shipment of wheat from Seneca County to Albany, and yet he saw it as a man of business. He could envision continuous water transportation from the Hudson River to the Great Lakes without fully appreciating the effect it would have on the farmers of the State. This is partially explained by the fact that his grander schemes were always through wilderness areas, and it was but natural that he should think of the settlement of new lands before he thought of their exploitation. In transportation he was thinking of the future while in agriculture he was working with current reality. Any discussion of Watson and his contribution to agriculture should include at least a mention of his labors for the improvement of transportation. From 1789 to the end of his life in 1842, he was constantly promoting turnpikes, roads, canals, and finally a grand railroad from Boston to Ogdensburg on Lake Ontario. Most of his projects were successful and stand as monuments to his industry, and they all directly or indirectly aided the cause of agriculture.

Conclusion. To Watson the future of America was a sublime conception. In 1820 he predicted that by 1930 there would be 133,000,000 people in the United States and by the year 2000 the population would equal that of China, or 300,000,000. The basis of prosperity was to be found in agriculture, which under a paternalistic government would lead the world in the application of science and industry. Not only would America be self-sufficient, but in time she would hold the Old World tribute to her. His enthusiasm and confidence knew no bounds, and a major portion of his success in the promotion of agricultural projects lay in his ability to pass this spirit on to others. He hailed the business of farming as a scientific profession and glorified its contribution to the Nation. Farming was a respectable and even enviable occupation, and the farmer as the forgotten man was to be redeemed. It can be truly said that the Nation in general and the field of agriculture in particular was richer as a result of Watson's passing show.

POPULISM UP-TO-DATE: THE STORY OF THE FARMERS' UNION

WILLIAM P. TUCKER

Macalester College, Saint Paul, Minnesota

Despite the fact that the United States was until recently a rural society, surprisingly little systematic research and writing has been done on the history of American farm organizations.[1] This applies especially to the Farmers' Educational and Cooperative Union of America, the farm group which carries over to the present much of the spirit of the agrarian reform movement of the late nineteenth century. Two brief studies of this organization, usually referred to simply as the National Farmers' Union, were made at the end of the first World War,[2] while a more recent work includes an extensive section on the early years of the Union

[1] This article is part of a larger study prepared as a doctoral dissertation at the University of Minnesota. Professors William Anderson, E. M. Kirkpatrick, Ernest S. Osgood, George M. Stephenson, and O. B. Jesness made helpful suggestions in the course of the full study. The author also wishes to express appreciation to Robert Handschin, director of research of the Farmers Union Grain Terminal Association, for a number of suggestions arising from his background of experience in the work of the Farmers' Union and its cooperatives.

[2] Commodore B. Fisher, *The Farmers' Union* (Lexington, Ky., 1920); and Edward Wiest, *Agricultural Organization in the United States* (Lexington, Ky., 1923), 475–502. The first is based largely on primary material, and the latter leans chiefly on secondary material.

in the region where it originated.[3] Aside from these studies, both primary and secondary sources concerning the Union are limited and often inaccessible.

The decline of the Grange and the Farmers' Alliance left an open field in most areas for the rise of another general farm organization of kindred spirit—an organization that would place chief emphasis on the prosperity of farmers as a group and only secondary emphasis on their social life. The Farmers' Union entered this field and spread rapidly throughout Texas, its birthplace, and into neighboring States.

Every successful movement has its moving spirit, its dreamer of dreams. In this case, it was Newt (Isaac Newton) Gresham, the founder of the Union. He was born on February 20, 1858 at Florence, Alabama. In 1881, he became active in the Farmers' Alliance, serving as an organizer in Texas, Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee. He was active in the Populist Revolt but returned to the Democratic fold under William Jennings Bryan.[4]

About 1900, Gresham began to publish a paper at Point, Raines County, Texas, which he used as a vehicle for promoting his cherished idea of an all-embracing general farm organization that would profit by the mistakes of the Grange and the Alliance. To hold its members, he emphasized that a farm organization should show tangible benefits and that it should be kept free from partisan politics. Both objectives proved difficult for the Union, but it was probably more successful with the former.

After months of penury and single-minded devotion to his objective, Gresham and his co-workers launched the first local of the new organization at Smyrna in Raines County in 1902. This poor sandy agricultural community was fertile ground for rural discontent, and the farmers joined even more readily than anticipated. The initiation fee of $1.00 and the 5-cent monthly dues offered few financial obstacles, even to the poorest farmers. In fact, progress was so good that Gresham and the other charter members soon borrowed $1,000 with which to push organization work, and the incoming mail became so heavy that the local post office had to hire extra help.

From the beginning, large numbers of organizers operating on a fee basis were used. Since many of them were former Populist and Alliance men, the feeling arose that the Union might be a revival of the Alliance or the People's Party. This made old-line Democrats skeptical, especially when ex-Populists preached the evils of the "money trust" with evangelical fervor. Because of poor business management by the first officers, the organizers got out of control, few records were kept during the early years (and many of these were lost by fire), and chaos reigned throughout the organization. The first active officers of the organization in Texas were J. B. Morris, president, Dr. Lee Seamster, secretary, and Newt Gresham, organizer, all of whom lived in the vicinity of Point.

Since the Union has always striven to be an organization of dirt farmers, it has tried to limit its membership to farmers and rural laborers, teachers, ministers, country doctors, and sympathetic country editors. Despite this aim, the non-farmer element in Texas soon became influential. This led to "purges" of the non-farmer members.

The Union grew rapidly during its first four years. State organizations were established in Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, and Alabama. In addition, organizational work was carried on effectively in Tennessee, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Missouri, and Kansas. One estimate, probably overoptimistic, gives the total membership in 1905 as 200,000.

Several reasons contributed to the rapid spread of the new organization in the South. The secret nature of the order and its low dues appealed to the poor farmers. The poverty of the average small farmer was conducive to uprisings against the mortgage and credit system, and emphasis was placed on its evils in the South. The Union appeared at a time when the Texas agricultural college had aroused interest in organization by a series of farmers' institutes.

The Union's growth would probably have been even more pronounced except for widespread dissension as a result of poor business management and frequent personality conflicts. One important cause of interstate dissension was the apparent determination of the Texas Union officials to retain their control over membership in the other States

[3] Robert Lee Hunt, *A History of Farmer Movements in the Southwest, 1873–1925* (College Station, Texas, 1935), 41–143, a study based largely on primary sources.

[4] For additional data on Gresham and the founding and early years of the Union in Texas, see *ibid.*, 44–77; Charles Simon Barrett, *The Mission, History and Times of the Farmers' Union* (Nashville, Tenn., 1909), 103–106; Fisher, *The Farmers' Union*, 8–12; Gladys Talbott Edwards, *The Farmers Union Triangle* (Jamestown, N. Dak., 1941), 22–28.

as long as possible. Even the first state-wide convention of Texas was not called until early in 1904 when the demand had become irresistible. At that time the officials reported a Texas membership of 50,000. At the second Texas state-wide convention, held in August 1904, the secretary reported 100,000 members in 700 locals.

The third Texas convention met in February 1905 and included fraternal delegates from Alabama, South Carolina, Arkansas, and Oklahoma and Indian territories. Autonomy was granted to the last three, since their membership was large enough to demand it. The total membership in all States was placed at 200,000, with 120,000 in Texas. Resolutions adopted at this convention called for the banning of "partisan" political discussions in Union meetings, the establishment of a lobby at the State capitol, cooperation with trade unions, and promotion of laws for pure food control, an improved State department of agriculture, better facilities for the State agricultural college, and better roads.

By the time the fourth Texas convention met in August 1905, internal dissensions had caused a large drop in the membership. There was opposition to nonfarmer "outsiders" in the group and to "political" activity by ex-Populists. Members in other States sought freedom from Texas rule. Although his honesty and sincerity were never questioned, Gresham's unbusinesslike record-keeping caused much dissatisfaction.

Despite internal dissensions, the fourth convention passed resolutions on the following matters. It opposed the use of convict labor in competition with free labor, thus reflecting pro-union-labor sentiment, and opposed excessive freight rates. It favored erection of cooperative elevators and warehouses, establishment of a lobby at the State capitol, cooperation with the American Federation of Labor in gaining recognition for the union label on products of both labor and agriculture, and provision for holding cotton for a price of 10 cents per pound.

Out of the trials of the early years came valuable lessons in both marketing and supply cooperation, especially in the marketing of cotton. Important savings were recorded for the producers as early as 1903, when the Union claimed a saving of $6,000 for that year in the marketing of Raines County cotton. In the same year, efforts were made to sell cotton on the basis of quality and to limit cotton acreage by voluntary agreement as a means of controlling prices. Cotton warehouses were developed on a rather large scale, but the movement failed largely because of poor business management and because the bulk of the cotton producers did not join.

The first period of Farmers' Union history ends in December 1905 with the establishment of the national organization. The next year Newt Gresham, the founder, died, and Charles S. Barrett, who largely personified the Union and its program for the next twenty-two years, was elected national president. Barrett was an able tactician, and his work at the national capital earned for him the nickname "the friend of presidents." Theodore Roosevelt appointed Barrett to the Country Life Commission, and Woodrow Wilson named him to an agricultural advisory post at the Versailles peace conference.[5]

Barrett's home at Union City, Georgia, was for many years the national office. Theretofore a mere crossroads, it grew into a town which included a Farmers' Union fertilizer plant, an implement factory, a wholesale farm supply firm, a Union bank, and three hotels.[6] With the decline of the Union in the South and of Barrett's influence, Union City became a ghost town.

The convention establishing the National Farmers' Union in December 1905 was held as a result of overwhelming pressure from the Union groups in the various States. The federal type of organization was chosen after considerable sentiment had been expressed for a national council consisting of the heads of the various groups. The latter was probably a reflection of prevailing sentiment against the type of centralized control which the Texas officers had long wielded. The national constitution that was adopted closely paralleled that of the Texas Union.[7]

The second national convention, held in September 1906, made known the Union's stand on a number of matters of public interest. Increased funds were urged for industrial and agricultural education in the public schools. A pioneer resolution of its kind urged the establishment of public school courses in economic and governmental affairs. Other resolutions called for federal appropriations for rural roads, a parcel-post

[5] Interview with A. W. Ricker, a Union pioneer; Fisher, *The Farmers' Union*, 18.

[6] Edwards, *The Farmers Union Triangle*, 37.

[7] Hunt, *A History of the Farmer Movements in the Southwest*, 77–79.

system, enforcement of the antitrust laws, and more stringent immigration laws.[8]

During 1907, the Union enjoyed rapid growth. Up to that time 13 State Unions, comprising 17,938 locals, had been chartered. That year charters were issued for Missouri, Illinois, and Kansas, thus indicating that Union influence was already penetrating the North Central States, the center of its present strength.[9]

In 1908, the Union approached the peak of its strength in the South, while its growing influence in the upper Mississippi Valley is shown in the list of its convention committees. Six of 21 committees dealt with cotton but 3 were concerned with grain. Good relations with labor are indicated by the presence of an American Federation of Labor fraternal delegate at this and subsequent meetings. Similar relations with other groups were also cultivated. One evidence of this was a series of mass meetings which the Union held in the Southern and Central States for the discussion of agricultural problems. Representatives of political, business, and other groups participated.[10]

The year 1909 was a turning point in the history of the Union. By the end of 1908, 17 State organizations had been chartered as follows: Texas, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, and Alabama in 1905 or earlier; Mississippi, South Carolina, and Tennessee in 1906; Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma in 1907; and Colorado, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Washington in 1908. Twelve of these 17 are Southern States, while two others are Border States. The influence of the Union was beginning to be felt in a small way in the Rocky Mountain region and on the Pacific coast.[11]

The geographical location of Union growth during 1909–1920 was in marked contrast with that of its earlier years. Eight more State Unions were chartered, namely California, Indiana, and Virginia in 1910, Oregon in 1911, Nebraska in 1914, North Dakota in 1916, and Iowa and South Dakota in 1917, but only one of these States is in the South. The States with substantial memberships in 1919 were Kansas, Nebraska, and Iowa.[12] By the end of the war decade, all the Southern States showed substantial declines in membership, in contrast with favorable growth in Northern and Western States. Among the reasons advanced for this decline were an unsound mushroom growth, failure of many Union-sponsored cooperative enterprises through improper business management and ill-timed holding of cotton for higher prices, and the fact that a membership characterized by poverty and illiteracy was an unsound foundation on which to build an efficient democratic organization.[13]

During the war the Union's expansion was slower, possibly due to wartime "prosperity." The relative prosperity of these years may have been a deterrent to organizational work among farmers in the northern area, for during most of the decade the prices received by farmers for grains and livestock were more favorable in terms of real income than those for cotton.[14]

The Union's chief concerns during the war years were the unification of organized agriculture and the development of cooperatives. A step toward the first objective was taken in 1915 with the establishment of the National Board of Farm Organizations as a lobbying group in Washington, D. C. It was a council of representatives from a number of farm organizations. The Union was one of the chief supporters of this organization, and Barrett, the Union's president, was its chairman.[15]

In 1920, the Union-sponsored cooperatives were strongest in the North Central States, the Union's most recently organized area. In the order of their cooperative business, the States ranked in the following descending order: Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, the Pacific Northwest (Oregon, Washington, Idaho), Iowa, and South Dakota. This corresponds roughly with rank in membership in the national Union.[16] However, it would be difficult to say to what extent each was cause or effect, for other North Central States where the Union is weak also developed strong cooperatives.

In the cooperative field the Union's first large-scale successes were in cooperative purchasing,

[8] Barrett, *The Mission*, 158, 257–258.

[9] Based on national dues paid through the State organizations, the best estimates of national membership for 1908–10 and 1917–19 are 121,826 and 140,066, respectively. The total number of members active in State Unions was probably substantially greater. Fisher, *The Farmers' Union*, 15–16; Edwards, *The Farmers Union Triangle*, 29.

[10] Fisher, *The Farmers' Union*, 21–23.

[11] *Ibid.*, table 1.

[12] *Ibid.*, tables 1 and 2.

[13] Interview with A. W. Ricker.

[14] U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, *Agricultural Statistics*, 1942.

[15] Fisher, *The Farmers' Union*, 27.

[16] *Ibid.*, 48.

especially in the South. Its first extensive efforts in cooperative marketing were also in the South in connection with cotton. The cooperative processing plants under Union leadership were mainly local organizations which limited their efforts to first processing work such as creameries, phosphate plants, small flour mills, etc.[17]

Terminal marketing of livestock was begun by a Union-sponsored firm on the Omaha market in 1917. Within the same year, the Equity Cooperative Exchange established a similar firm on the South Saint Paul market, which soon came under Farmers' Union sponsorship.[18] During the second decade a number of other Union-sponsored terminal livestock firms achieved success in this area.

Although the greatest progress in Union-sponsored terminal grain marketing came later, the foundations were laid in the second decade. The most successful example is the Farmers Union Grain Terminal Association of Saint Paul, an outgrowth of the grain-marketing organization of the Equity Cooperative Exchange. The Exchange, an offspring of the American Society of Equity, was established in the spring-wheat area in 1911 and grew rapidly in the years following 1914, building a chain of country elevators in Minnesota and North Dakota and a terminal grain-marketing agency in Saint Paul.[19]

During the war decade the Union's influence increased appreciably. It exerted considerable pressure for government-supplied agricultural credit, especially in connection with the Rural Credits Act of 1916 and the proposals for expanding the Federal Reserve Bank program. It exercised increasing influence on the cooperative movement in agriculture, especially in connection with livestock marketing. It took the lead in establishing the National Board of Farm Organizations in 1915. It shifted the principal scene of its activities to the North Central States, the area of its greatest strength at the present time. Through its roots in the Equity Cooperative Exchange, the Union-type of grain-marketing program had its origin in the war decade. The Union grew slowly during the later years of the decade and declined somewhat in the early twenties.

The post-war decade was one of deflation and depression for agriculture. Large increases in grain production and in land values had come to the grain and stock-raising States, the area of most recent development for the Union. Post-war agricultural deflation struck this region with special severity. The two McNary-Haugen bills were passed only to be vetoed, and pressure for other agricultural measures came to naught. In part, the lack of legislative success for agricultural price programs was due to the fact that economic distress struck different regions with varying degrees of severity and at different times. The pinch was felt first in the spring-wheat region and later in the corn-hog belt.

Widespread and effective pressure for agricultural legislation came first from a number of special organizations which cooperated with the general farm organizations and certain cooperative marketing associations in support of particular bills. Successively, the American Council of Agriculture, the Executive Committee of Twenty-two, and the Corn Belt Federation of Farm Organizations (the Corn Belt Committee) appeared on the scene. The American Council of Agriculture was the first to bring together cooperating organizations of national scope. It was the center of leadership during 1924 and 1925. In 1926, its leadership of the forces seeking enactment of the McNary-Haugen bill passed to the Executive Committee of Twenty-two, which grew out of a conference of Midwestern governors. This group functioned until the presidential veto of the second McNary-Haugen measure brought the issue into the 1928 political campaign.[20]

One of the important special lobbying groups of the late twenties was the Corn Belt Committee which functioned from May 1925 to 1930. This loose confederation of 35 grain-belt farm organizations, which cooperated with the Executive Committee of Twenty-two between 1926 and 1928, was established in considerable measure through the initiative of Farmers' Union leaders.

[17] *Ibid.*, 35–48.

[18] Edwin G. Nourse and Joseph G. Knapp, *The Cooperative Marketing of Livestock* (Washington, 1931), 103–111; *Farmers Union Herald*, June 1927, December 1929.

[19] A. W. Ricker, "The Birth and Growth of the Northwest Farmers Union," *Farmers Union Herald*, November, December 1937; H. Bruce Price, ed., *The Marketing of Farm Products* (Minneapolis, 1927), 100.

[20] Chester C. Davis, "The Development of Agricultural Policy since the End of the World War," U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, *Yearbook*, 1940, 304–306, 309.

A. W. Ricker, editor of the *Farmers Union Herald* of Saint Paul, served as secretary, and Charles S. Barrett, national president of the Union, presided at the organizational meeting. The committee's membership included 8 State Unions, 5 State Farm Bureaus, 1 State Grange, 7 independent State and regional organizations, and 14 commodity organizations which included dairy, wheat, corn, and livestock marketing groups.[21]

The program adopted by the Corn Belt Committee called for cost of production plus a reasonable profit for the farmer, extension of cooperative marketing, and creation by Congress of an export corporation "for the purpose of buying so much of the available surplus of agricultural production as may be necessary" to insure a 5-percent return to the farmer on his investment. This corporation was to be administered by a board of farmers nominated by the various farm organizations, one member coming from each organization.[22]

Three principal points of view were represented in the Corn Belt Committee: the labor view of the National Producers Alliance and some Farmers' Union leaders that the committee should be strong enough as an organization to bargain collectively for commodity prices; the political action viewpoint of Farm Bureau representatives; and those holding to the path of cooperation alone. In the opinion of Ricker, the committee's secretary, the degree of success achieved resulted from featuring all three approaches: maintaining political action on a nonpartisan basis; demanding farmer management of government farm programs; and securing support from Western and Southern congressmen. The member organizations were united in support of the McNary-Haugen bills, and this sentiment later resulted in joint support of such cooperative federations as the Farmers National Grain Corporation and the National Cooperatives, Inc., in both of which Farmers' Union leadership played a prominent part.[23]

During the twenties, all the general farm organizations placed increased emphasis on cooperatives. At the end of the decade, Barrett of the Farmers' Union claimed that his organization had organized more cooperatives than any other general farm organization.[24] The Union had, without question, been one of the chief builders of cooperatives, but his claim would be difficult to prove or disprove, since most cooperatives are not affiliated with any general farm organization.

The cooperative marketing of grain during most of the twenties was not so successful as that of livestock. By 1922 when the Iowa Farmers' Union bought the Equity livestock commission houses in Chicago and Saint Paul, there were seven such Union establishments.[25] Union-sponsored grain marketing came into prominence only with the closing years of the decade.

Actual membership figures within the Union were of less significance during the third decade than for the second. By 1919 the center of influence had shifted from the South to the North Central States, and the membership (about 140,000) paying national dues was somewhat larger than for the peak years (1908–1910) of Union influence in the South. However, the postwar agricultural slump of 1920 brought a substantial decline in membership. After the middle of the twenties, the position of the Union improved, due to its merger with the National Producers Alliance and the American Society of Equity, and its leadership in the affairs of the Corn Belt Committee. In 1928, the strongest State Unions were those of Nebraska, North Dakota, Kansas, Oklahoma, Iowa, South Dakota, Montana, and Colorado. In 1927 a charter covering a membership of 10,000 was granted for North Dakota. Within a year this figure was doubled, and North Dakota ranked with Nebraska as one of the two strongest States.[26]

The Equity Cooperative Exchange, which was absorbed by the Union in 1926, was an offspring of the American Society of Equity. Organized as a cooperative terminal grain sales agency in Saint

[21] *Des Moines Register*, Sept. 9, 1928; *Farmers Union Herald*, April, May, and November 1927, and April, July, and August 1928.

[22] A. W. Ricker in *ibid.*, August 1937.

[23] *Ibid.*, May 1938. The Farmers National Grain Corporation was the terminal grain marketing agency of the cooperatives established under Federal Farm Board auspices. The Farmers Union Terminal Association played the chief role in this corporation. See *ibid.*, January 1930–1938, *passim*.

National Cooperatives, Inc., is an association formed in 1933 by the leading regional cooperative wholesale organizations in the United States and Canada. See *ibid.*, April 1934; Emory S. Bogardus, *Dictionary of Cooperation* (New York, 1943), 42.

[24] *Farmers Union Herald*, May, October 1937, May 1938.

[25] *Farm Market Guide* (Minneapolis), February 1925; *Farmers Union Herald*, June 1927.

[26] Edwards, *The Farmers Union Triangle*, 31–36.

Paul in 1911, it had grown to sizeable proportions within a decade and had some eighty local elevators in Minnesota and North Dakota. Lack of good business management and the opposition of the private grain trade sent it into receivership early in 1923, but it was revived as a Union-sponsored agency. Thus, the Union type of program reaches back through its roots in the Equity movement at least as far as 1911 in the spring-wheat region.

The National Producers Alliance was the brain child of Arthur C. Townley, who laid the groundwork for its organization in 1923 during the last days of the Nonpartisan League. Early in 1924, A. W. Ricker, editor of the *Farmers Union Herald* and a Union pioneer in the area, became the national manager of the Alliance, which "enrolled" an estimated 40,000 members in the spring-wheat area. The Alliance was an amorphous organization, but its merger with the Union brought skilled and aggressive leadership and ideas to the latter group.[27]

Another development, however, was of greater influence in Union growth in the spring-wheat area in the late twenties. In 1927 the national Union appointed the Northwest Organizing Committee to develop the organization in Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, and Montana. In 1930, when the work of the committee was brought to a close, some 60,000 new members had been added in these four States. This was accomplished by using large crews of organizers to conduct a farm to farm campaign in each county. It was financed in large part by the profits of the Union-sponsored terminal livestock and grain marketing firms at Saint Paul.[28]

The history of the Farmers' Union after 1929 was marked by a number of changes. Barrett withdrew from active leadership of the organization that he had headed for twenty-two years. Increasing emphasis was given to cooperatives and legislation, and for half a decade there was dissension within the organization over the relative importance of the two programs. In recent years the organization has progressed notably under the youthful and vigorously socially conscious leadership of James G. Patton as national president.

[27] A. W. Ricker, in *Farmers Union Herald*, June, July, October 1937.

[28] *Farmers Union Herald*, Dec. 15, 1930, June 1938; Edwards, *The Farmers Union Triangle*, 32; *Nebraska Union Farmer* (Omaha), Mar. 13, 1929.

Early in 1929, following President Coolidge's veto of the second McNary-Haugen bill, the leaders of the Farm Bureau, the Grange, and the Union jointly urged upon Congress a program of effective tariff protection, provision for control of surpluses, an effective check on overproduction, and farmer control of any forthcoming marketing system.[29] In July 1929, these three organizations agreed upon plans for launching the Farmers National Grain Corporation, which was incorporated that fall as the first national marketing cooperative under the Federal Farm Board. Some of the leading figures in the Farmers National Grain Corporation were Union men. This touched off latent dissension within the Union along geographical lines, based in part on the different commodity-producing areas. The Union's spring-wheat people, on the whole, favored the Farm Board program.

Intra-Union dissension became more pronounced in May 1931 when the Farm Board faction in the Union wrote finis to the 6-year-old Corn Belt Committee by withdrawing from that body and establishing the National Committee of Farm Organizations as a lobbying group. By this time the official policy of the national Union was vigorously anti-Farm Board, since C. E. Huff was replaced in the presidency by John A. Simpson of Oklahoma. On the legislative front, the national Union urged cost-of-production legislation, in contrast with the equalization fee and the export debenture plans of the Farm Bureau and the Grange, respectively.[30]

In January 1932, the leading farm organizations established the National Farm Conference, which met frequently during the next two years and presented a fairly united farm front. In December of the same year, the conference prepared a price-parity, production-control, processing-tax bill, similar to the Agricultural Adjustment Administration enactment of the following year. This measure was passed by the House of Representatives but met defeat in the Senate.[31]

During 1932 and 1933 when agriculture was at a very low ebb the Union was responsible for one of

[29] *Farmers Union Herald*, June 1, and November 1929.

[30] *Ibid.*, Dec. 21, 1931; *Minnesota Farm Bureau News* (St. Paul), central ed., Apr. 1, 1932.

[31] DeWitt C. Wing, "Trends in National Farm Organizations," U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, *Yearbook*, 1940, 963.

the most picturesque farm "revolts" in American history. The farm holiday movement crystallized in the corn belt under fiery Milo Reno, president of the Iowa Farmers' Union. This picturesque apostle of agrarian radicalism had successively placed his talents at the disposal of the Farmers' Alliance, Bryanism, and the Farmers' Union. He ended his career as head of the National Farm Holiday Association and the Iowa Farmers' Union, making vigorous attacks on the administrations of Herbert Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt, on the Farm Bureau, county agents, and all others deemed to be exploiters of the dirt farmers. Reno and Renoism first came to national attention in 1931 during the Iowa "Cow War," when the farmers of that area forcibly resisted the compulsory program of testing cattle for tuberculosis. Reno was a staunch advocate of cost-of-production legislation for farm products, currency inflation, and direct action through a farm marketing strike.[32]

At the 1931 convention of the Iowa Farmers' Union, Reno secured passage of a resolution asking for a "farmers buying, selling, and tax-paying strike," unless Congress passed adequate agricultural legislation. Such legislation was to include currency inflation, increased income, inheritance, and gift taxes, and confiscation of great concentrations of wealth in wartime. During the summer of 1932, the Iowa Farm Holiday Association, under Reno's presidency, called a strike to withhold farm produce from markets in order to enforce cost-of-production prices. By fall, Reno was heading the National Farm Holiday Association, with units in other Middle Western States. The movement lacked cohesion and achieved little in the way of permanent concrete results, but it effectively dramatized the severity of the farm problem facing the Roosevelt administration.[33]

The Agricultural Adjustment Administration and subsequent New Deal agricultural legislation met a mixed reception from Farmers' Union leaders. The dominant group in the national Union was thoroughly embittered by the New Deal's rejection of its cost-of-production demands, but the Union leaders of the spring-wheat area supported the Agricultural Adjustment Administration and prepared the first commodity program under it, namely the one for wheat including a crop insurance feature.[34]

After the beginning of World War II, the Union's official national program was much more often in agreement with the program of the Roosevelt Administration, especially in the demand for maximum production and the opposition to inflation. This wartime Union point of view is illustrated in a vehement indictment of the purported anti-New Deal Farm Bureau program. The national legislative secretary of the Union declared: "They have attempted to hamstring the Farm Security Administration and ultimately to wipe it out. They have sought to break up the Agricultural Adjustment program by its conversion into a state-administered 48-particled program that probably would not work. They have fought the Food Stamp program and surplus disposal programs generally. They have nearly wrecked federal farm labor programs that sought to use all available manpower," as well as following a purportedly inflationary price program.[35]

The program of the Union at this time was briefly summarized by the same Union official. "Many other things are involved besides simple provision of higher farm prices: Expansion of cooperatives for the very smallest farmers, encouragement of division of great farms into family units, more intensive farming, direction of technological research to the needs of small and medium-sized farms, technical assistance of the Farm Security type on a grand scale, great extension of low-cost credit."[36]

Union-sponsored cooperatives have shown substantial growth since 1929, with more than 350,000 farmers now members of these business concerns, nearly half of them being in Wisconsin, Minnesota, the Dakotas, and Montana. These concerns include oil companies, an oil refinery, exchanges

[32] Walter Davenport, "Get Away from Those Cows," *Collier's* 89(9):10–11, 44, 46 (Feb. 27, 1932); *Des Moines Tribune*, Aug. 18, 1932, and May 5, 1936; *Iowa Union Farmer*, Jan. 11, 1933 and May 28, 1936; Roland A. White, *Milo Reno, Farmers Union Pioneer* (Iowa City, 1941), *passim*.

[33] *Des Moines Register*, Sept. 19, 1931; *Farm Holiday News*, February 1933; Donald R. Murphy, "The Farmers Go on Strike," *New Republic*, 72:66–68 (Aug. 31, 1932).

[34] John A. Simpson, *The Militant Voice of Agriculture* (Oklahoma City, 1934), 49–73; *Farmers Union Herald*, August 1933.

[35] Russell Smith, "Big Business and the Farm Bloc," *Antioch Review*, 4:192 (Summer 1944).

[36] *Ibid.*, 201.

(wholesale firms), livestock shipping associations, general stores, grain elevators and terminal marketing firms, creameries, trucking associations, a hospital, and marketing agencies for poultry, wool, and cotton.[37]

The Union has pioneered in the field of cooperative medical care. Its hospital at Elk City, Oklahoma, was the first cooperative hospital established in the United States.[38] A current example of Union support of health work is its sponsorship, in cooperation with the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations, of a Midwestern regional conference on rural health. Discussions centered around the main points of President Truman's public health program. Participants discussed possibilities for cooperatives in such a national program.[39]

Union livestock commission firms are operating at Saint Paul, Sioux City, Omaha, Saint Joseph, Kansas City, Chicago, Fargo, and Billings. The livestock terminal marketing firms had their greatest development before 1920, and expansion of their work was only moderate after that date. This means that they have suffered a relative eclipse in comparison with the large grain-marketing cooperatives. Annual net savings reported by the Omaha and Saint Paul firms, the two largest, have usually been between $20,000 and $30,000 in recent years. The increasing tendency for growers to send stock direct to market by truck instead of by rail seems to darken the future for terminal livestock cooperatives.[40]

The progress of the Union-sponsored wholesale exchanges has been substantial. Among the most important are those at Omaha, Kansas City, and Saint Paul. The latter is the largest and is currently doing a $20,000,000 business with some 200,000 members and patrons in 600 local cooperatives in the Northwestern States. Plans call for doubling the Farmers' Union Central Exchange's net worth of $5,000,000 in the next few years. Total savings for the years 1944 and 1945 stood at $2,931,969. To supply the expanding gasoline needs of its patrons, the Central Exchange owns one refinery and has a substantial interest in another. Tentative plans call for the establishment of a tractor assembly plant.[41]

Union-sponsored terminal grain-marketing firms have come to the fore since the twenties. Important firms are located at Omaha, Kansas City, and Saint Paul. The Farmers Union Grain Terminal Association of Saint Paul is the Nation's largest cooperative grain-marketing agency. Its history traces back to the pioneer efforts of its forebearer, the Equity Cooperative Exchange, through the absorption of that firm by Union leadership, and the work of the Farmers National Grain Corporation, the combination of American grain-marketing cooperatives under the Federal Board program. The Farmers' Union Terminal Association (successor of the Equity Cooperative Exchange and predecessor of the Farmers' Union Grain Terminal Association) was the largest stockholder in the Farmers National Grain Corporation. At present, the Grain Terminal Association exercises prevailing leadership in the National Federation of Grain Cooperatives and edits that organization's *Co-op Grain Quarterly*. The Grain Terminal Association's activities include the following: a terminal grain commission marketing business; the merchandising of grain at terminal and interior markets in most of the Forty-eight States; terminal and sub-terminal elevators with more than 10,000,000 bushels storage capacity; a line of 137 local elevators purchased from a private firm; a durum wheat mill; the financing of country elevator associations during peak seasonal shipping operations, plus accounting and auditing services for such cooperatives; and the financing and directing of three subsidiaries, namely a grain and supply company, a feed manufacturing plant, and a firm that includes 44 branch lumberyards and 29 coal yards.[42]

In addition to the development of cooperatives, other important parts of the Union program in recent years have included admission of Negroes to membership on a basis of equality with white people, promotion of Union organization work with the aid of profits from the Union-sponsored business firms, cooperative relationships with organ-

[37] *Farmers Union Herald*, December 1939; Wing, "Trends in National Farm Organizations," 954; Edwards, *The Farmers Union Triangle*, 27.

[38] *ibid.*, 126–127; Michael Shadid, *A Doctor for the People* (New York, 1939), *passim*.

[39] *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, Feb. 7, 1946.

[40] Edwards, *The Farmers Union Triangle*, 123; *St. Paul Dispatch*, Dec. 11, 1944.

[41] *Central Exchange Messenger* (South St. Paul), 1(1):11-17 (June 1943); *St. Paul Dispatch*, Feb. 19, 1946.

[42] Farmers Union Grain Terminal Association, *GTA Digest* (St. Paul), 3(11):40–42 (September-October 1943), and *Annual Report*, 1944, p. 5, 12–21.

ized labor, and development of a highly successful junior program for educating younger members for cooperative leadership.[43]

The National Farmers' Union is not an organization characterized by centralization of power but quite the opposite. Its success after the early years was due largely to the force of its leadership. Barrett whose presidency ended in 1928 was succeeded by C. E. Huff, a quiet idealist who developed into a good business leader as head of the Farmers National Grain Corporation after failing of reelection to the Union presidency in 1930.[44] He is now the active head of the national organization's insurance program.

John A. Simpson, long head of the Oklahoma Union, succeeded Huff as national president. His four-year administration reflected preoccupation with the legislative phase of the program, with demands for monetary reform and cost-of-production legislation.[45]

During 1934–37, the national presidency was held by E. E. Everson, formerly head of the South Dakota Union. The national paper came to deal almost exclusively with legislative and political action, to the growing irritation of the cooperative-minded elements in the Union. Matters came to a head when the national secretary and editor of the paper, E. E. Kennedy, who for several years favored Father Coughlin's ideas, became an open supporter of the priest's political program. Kennedy failed of reelection in 1936 and Everson in 1937.[46]

John Vesecky, former head of the Kansas Union, served as national president from 1937 to 1940, with the cooperative-minded elements in the Union again coming to the fore.[47]

James G. Patton has served as national president since 1940. The youngest of the Union's national presidents, he has sought to develop a vigorous and progressive program, balanced as to promotion of cooperatives and legislation. He has worked with many groups active in the field of public affairs, kept the program of the Union effectively before the public, stood for closer cooperation with organized labor, and is an eager student of international affairs.[48]

In the years since 1927, one other leader—M. W. Thatcher—has exercised great influence in the affairs of the national Union. Following a background in the Equity Cooperative Exchange and the Nonpartisan League, Thatcher served as chairman of the national Union's Northwest Organizing Committee (1927–1930), which developed the Union's strength in the spring-wheat area. Building on the foundations of the Exchange, he developed through various intermediate steps the present Farmers Union Grain Terminal Association. At various times between 1932 and 1942, he served on important governmental committees and was in charge of the legislative activities of the National Union or Union-connected organizations.[49]

Throughout its history, the Farmers' Union has been the general farm organization most closely identified with militant agrarian reform since the days of the Farmers' Alliance, of which it is a spiritual descendant. There have been various schools of thought within the Union on the relative emphasis to place on cooperatives and legislation, but all have agreed on the need of raising rural living standards. Varying emphases have therefore been placed on cooperatives, agricultural credit, tariffs and other trade barriers, taxation, and the relationships of government and business. As one aspect of continuing the Populist tradition, monopolies and middlemen have been consistently opposed, while maintenance of the family-type farming system has been a basic objective. During the recent war years, this objective was sought in part through support of government subsidy programs. Recent Union proposals have urged national agricultural relations legislation comparable to the National Labor Relations Act for collective bargaining purposes and a system of production contracts between each farmer and the Federal Government. Other aspects of the Union program which may be regarded as a continuance of the Populist tradition have been its advocacy of woman suffrage, direct election of senators, and regulation of business, and in recent years anti-poll-tax legislation, full-employment legislation, extensive

[43] Edwards, *The Farmers Union Triangle*, 53–57; *GTA Digest*, 3(11):11 (September–October 1943).

[44] *Farmers Union Herald*, Dec. 1, 1930.

[45] Edwards, *The Farmers Union Triangle*, 41.

[46] *Ibid.*, 42; *Farmers Union Herald*, December 1939.

[47] Edwards, *The Farmers Union Triangle*, 44–45.

[48] *Ibid.*, 54–55.

[49] *Farmers Union Herald*, December 1937; Farmers Union Grain Terminal Association, *Annual Report*, 1944, p. 34; Interview.

government planning, social security legislation, protection of civil liberties and minorities, friendship to labor, and progressive principles in taxation. The frame of circumstance within which this tradition of agrarian protest has been carried out is the steady relative decline of agriculture in comparison with the other industries. Therefore, the Union's tradition of protest is understandable.

Elements of strength within the organization have been its grass-roots democracy, the responsiveness of its officers to expressed membership sentiment, and its efforts to develop a balanced program featuring the economic, social, and political needs of the entire farm family. Elements of possible weakness have been a negative approach in too many cases (opposition to programs of other groups rather than more actively pushing its own program) and a tendency to scatter its energies on too many nonagricultural matters.

While the Union has at times overstated its case in its demands for reform, it has in the main supported the interests of the majority of the people in making a consistent demand for a fuller economic and cultural life for farm families. Post-war America would suffer a distinct loss if this type of program were to disappear.

THE AGRICULTURAL REGIONALISM OF THE TRANS-MISSISSIPPI WEST AS DELINEATED BY CYRUS THOMAS

JAMES C. MALIN

Department of History, University of Kansas

Cyrus Thomas (1825–1910) was born in Tennessee, studied medicine and then law, informally, removing to Illinois at the age of twenty-four where he practiced law, 1851–1865. From 1865 to 1869 he appears to have been a minister of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. As an amateur naturalist by avocation, he was one of the founders, in 1858, of the Illinois Natural History Society. In 1869 he became entomologist and botanist on the United States Geological and Geographical Survey of the Territories, directed by F. V. Hayden. From 1873 to 1875 he was professor of natural sciences at Southern Illinois Normal University and became State entomologist, 1874–1876. Later he was on the United States Entomological Commission and in 1882 became archeologist in the United States Bureau of Ethnology where he remained until the close of his career. During the period of his service with the Hayden survey, Thomas added to his accomplishments the role of agriculturist. This aspect of his varied contributions has been overlooked almost altogether by historians of western agriculture, and this study is offered as a contribution toward filling that gap.[1]

When Thomas first took up his duties with the Hayden survey in 1869, his experience as a naturalist had been limited in two respects. He had been essentially self-trained, and his geographical range, mostly Tennessee and Illinois, had not taken him west of the Mississippi River. His interests in the natural sciences were broad, how-

[1] Biographical sketches of Cyrus Thomas are available in *Who's Who in America* prior to 1910, *Who Was Who in America, 1897–1942* (Chicago, 1942); *Dictionary of American Biography*, 18:426 (New York, 1936); and *American Anthropologist*, series 2, 12:337–343 (1910). The last item includes a bibliography of his writings prepared by himself shortly before his death.

Thomas's reports to F. V. Hayden are in the 1869, 1870, 1871, and 1872 annual reports of the United States Geological and Geographical Survey of the Territories (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1867–1883). The individual volumes in the Hayden series vary in title.

Thomas's reports to the United States Commissioner of Agriculture appeared in two publications of the Department of Agriculture. His articles in the Department's *Monthly Reports*, 1869, p. 284–296, 379–381, carry his name as author, but the articles he wrote for the annual reports of the Commissioner of Agriculture, 1869, p. 601–626, 1870, p. 548–559, 559–569, 1871, p. 431–448, were not signed. They are, however, identified by his own bibliography in the *American Anthropologist*, previously cited. For Thomas's outlook, his unsigned article on "Recent Progress in Steam Culture" in the annual report of the Commissioner of Agriculture for 1870, p. 296–306, is of interest.

ever, and his powers of observation and interpretation proved to be more than ordinary, but he could hardly qualify as an agriculturist. More important perhaps than any other equipment for the task was his intellectual orientation as an old-fashioned naturalist, because his duty was to explore the possibilities of that relatively unknown quantity, an agricultural system functioning in an environment new and strange to him and his associates.

Thomas's report of 1869 was devoted to the Colorado and Northern New Mexico area and was completed by an extension of remarks in his report for the following year. His report of 1870 centered on Wyoming and adjacent territory, including the Salt Lake Basin. In 1871, Thomas made a brief survey of western Montana and adjacent country, but most of his attention was directed to California. His last report (1872) undertook the problem of agriculture in the northern plains, especially what was then Dakota Territory. In this connection he was led to undertake, but did not complete, a study of climate with a view to determining the boundary line between the area of sufficient and insufficient rainfall.

Thomas made a somewhat parallel series of reports to the United States Commissioner of Agriculture which contain a considerable body of information but convey the impression that they were in the nature of routine compilations in fulfillment of an assigned duty. For that reason they contribute little to the object of this study, which is based almost exclusively upon Thomas's highly significant reports to Hayden. Although each year's report was supposedly devoted to the particular area which the Hayden survey was studying, the succession of years resulted in the development of Thomas's outlook upon the whole Trans-Mississippi West. This point of view was not represented on the survey after his departure. His successors were specialists in topography and physical geography and did not attempt interpretations of agricultural regionalism in the Thomas manner.

Recognition of Regional Differences. At the conclusion of his first season (1869) in the Trans-Mississippi West, Thomas had not yet arrived at a clear appreciation of the fundamental regional differences between the high rainfall East and the mid and low rainfall West. It might be said, however, that he was on the way as he recognized that the low rainfall region was productive only if water was available: "Water is the great desideratum in the agricultural development of this country, and the method of its distribution we shall find is the true key to the agricultural system of the Territory . . ." (p. 134). This conclusion concerning water led him to adopt watersheds or hydrographic basins as physiographic units for descriptive purposes. The same principle was more fully developed the next year.

In his second report (1870) Thomas reached further significant conclusions:

> In studying the agricultural capacity of the vast Rocky Mountain region and broad plains of the West, and calculating the probable development of the same, it is necessary to lay aside, to a great extent, all our ideas of agriculture based upon experience in the States (p. 192).

After further explanations of details he pointed out:

> . . . the agricultural capacity of this region must be studied from its own stand-point; and each section must be carefully examined. Otherwise we are very apt, from our experience in other portions of the country, to form erroneous conclusions. Injustice, on this account, is often done to this section by travelers who pass hastily through it, along the railroad lines, judging of the fertility and productiveness of a spot by comparing it with the rain-moistened land of the States (p. 193).

Thomas was doing basic thinking, indeed, when he recognized in the statement just quoted that "this region must be studied from its own stand-point" instead of being valued by the alien standard of the East. After visiting California in 1871, Thomas suggested that the Federal Government should establish an agricultural experiment station there. "The conditions of climate, soil, humidity, &c., in that entire region are so different from that of the Atlantic coast, that experiments in the latter section have no applicability to the former" (p. 208).

Having recognized the principle that the regional differences were fundamental and that each region must be treated according to its own standards, the next logical step was to fix the dividing or transition line from one to the other. In 1869 Thomas made no definite commitments but commented that "The streams rushing down from the mountains slacken their course on the level plains where the great battle between moisture and

aridity begins" (p. 140). In 1870 he set the dividing line at the ninety-ninth meridian, east of which rain moisture was considered sufficient, and west of which irrigation was necessary for agriculture (p. 257). Not until 1872 was Thomas ready to make any detailed commitment and then only tentatively, until his proposed study of climate for which he was gathering data was completed. As he left the service of the Hayden geological survey soon after that season's work, this proposed study was not forthcoming, and the statement of 1872 must stand as representing his conclusions on the problem. During this last season in the West, Thomas worked primarily upon the northern plains, focusing particularly upon what was then Dakota Territory. He outlined his argument as follows:

> Here, running north and south, is found the dividing line between two regions [the great prairie-belt lying along the eastern margin of the great trans-Mississippi plains] and climates as different from each other as that of Europe from that of Asia; here, in fact, in an agricultural, climatological, and physical point of view, is the real dividing line between the eastern and western portions of the continent. We have long looked upon the great Rocky Mountain Range as the dividing line of the continent, and, so far as the flow of water is concerned, this is so; but the more this region is examined the more apparent does it become that in other respects this is far from being the rule. The chief dividing line between the two great continental climatic areas stretches north and south along the broad undulating plains of Kansas, Nebraska, Dakota, &c., and corresponds very nearly with the one hundredth meridian. Here, too, is the dividing line between great agricultural, faunal, and floral areas (p. 277).

Thomas was not satisfied, however, with this rather vague manner of indicating so important a dividing line, namely the boundary between areas of rainfall sufficient and insufficient for cereals and other conventional agricultural crops without irrigation.

> It becomes, therefore, very important to determine where this line is. It is true that the transition may be gradual and render it difficult to fix it with any great degree of exactitude, yet it must be possible to determine it approximately. The importance of this will scarcely be appreciated by those who have not come practically in contact with the question; but the individual who has gone beyond this line and opened a farm upon the broad prairie, depending upon the rain-fall alone to supply his crops, has learned by sad experience that knowledge which ought to be supplied to the public (p. 278).

Thomas was convinced that the line of sufficient rainfall in Dakota Territory lay west of the Red River Valley and that agriculture without irrigation was possible as far as the second crossing of the Cheyenne River. Between the Red River Valley and the second crossing "we see the grass growing much shorter and beginning to assume that peculiar character so well known on the western plains." Apparently, this point is the site of Valley City on the ninety-eighth meridian, at the second crossing of the river by the Northern Pacific Railroad west from Fargo (p. 304). He had changed his mind concerning Nebraska and in 1872 concluded that the Platte Valley could grow cereals farther west than formerly thought possible, not as a result of greater rainfall than elsewhere but because of greater moisture retention by the soil. In southern Nebraska the line was not farther west than Fort Kearney, except along the Republican Fork. Concerning the upper plains, he took the view that the line was farther east than formerly thought and that north of the Platte River the line bent eastward rapidly.

> There is another thing in connection with this subject, which I think is true both of this State [Nebraska] and Kansas; that is, that the amount of rain does not diminish so gradually as we go west as I had supposed, the supply in the eastern part of these States being almost equal to that of the States immediately east of them .... But if we go westward to the middle of these States the precipitation will diminish to not more than half this amount. We should therefore bear in mind that these [weather] records which appear so favorable apply only to the eastern third of these States (p. 309).

Thomas's analysis of the plains recognized the temperature factor which is so often neglected or ignored. In addition to a north-south moisture line west of which agriculture was hazardous, he thought of an east-west isothermal line north of which agriculture of the accepted eastern type would be hazardous. Lorin Blodgett assumed that the lines of mean summer temperature, after passing west of Lake Michigan, made a rapid bend northward through Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Dakota, and Thomas charged that "this statement has been used largely in the efforts to induce emigration to that portion of the Northwest." Thomas challenged the extreme form of the Blod-

gett view and, until the weather data was completely checked, took the ground that this view was exaggerated (p. 277).

Why Grass Instead of Trees? In 1872 Thomas asked the perennial question, why did this prairie and plains country grow grass instead of trees, but admitted that there was no satisfactory explanation. He rejected Lesquereaux's peat-bog theory as well as the theory of fineness of soil advanced by J. D. Whitney of Iowa.[2] Also, he asserted that the most widely held theory, that of annual burnings, was "unworthy of consideration" because it confused two separate questions, the origin as distinguished from the perpetuation of the grassland. So far as the annual burnings related to the controversy, he said they applied only to the second question. Thomas referred to the moisture theory of Foster, Hayden, and others as plausible so far as it went, but it did not explain why there was a want of moisture (p. 280–281).

Agricultural Capacity and Climatic Theories. The problem of the agricultural capacity of the West became related in Thomas's mind with the ubiquitous theories of climate, namely cycles or favorable permanent change. Concerning the rain-moistened country he said in 1869:

> I may as well remark here, that in my use of the terms "tillable," "arable," "susceptible of cultivation," &c., I do not intend thereby to exclude the idea of the future possibility of cultivating other sections, but simply intend to express the fact, that those sections, so termed, are now sufficiently supplied with water for farming purposes (p. 134).

At a later point in his discussion of 1869, Thomas said:

> The troublesome factor in the great problem of the development of the agricultural capacity of the vast western plains is the supply of water. Furnish this, and the fertile prairies and valleys east of the Mississippi will soon find a strong rival contending with them in the grain marts of the world for precedence. Furnish this, and the "Great American Desert" of old geographers will soon become one mighty field of flowing grain. Furnish this, and the few other minor impeding factors will soon be eliminated. The streams rushing down from the mountains slacken their course on the level plains where the great battle between moisture and aridity begins. Is there any power in the human grasp to assist nature in this struggle, and turn the scale in her favor (p. 140)?

First Thomas proposed to summarize some data bearing on climate and then to outline his theory. In gathering information concerning Colorado, he had been told that the rainfall had increased there after 1862. "Even the Arkansas [River], as late as 1862 and 1863, was dry, from Pawnee to the Cimarron crossing, but such a thing has not been known since." The same was true of the Pecos River and of Cherry Creek where Denver had been located and later flooded.

> Be the cause what it may, unless it is assumed that there is a cycle of years through which there is an increase, and that there will be a corresponding decrease, the fact must be admitted upon this accumulated testimony. I therefore give it as my firm conviction that this increase is of a permanent nature, and not periodical, and that it has commenced within eight years past, and that it is in some way connected with the settlement of the country; and that, as the population increases, the amount of moisture will increase (p. 141).

Thomas's theory came next:

> I believe that the great problem of settling the plains, if every solved, must be done by commencing with the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountain range and gradually moving eastward. This is the plan which nature herself has pointed out. The perpetual snows of the great central axis are the sources of the various streams which rush down upon the margin of these plains, but chiefly sink in their effort to cross it. Let the population gather around the points where these burst from the mountains, and as it increases pushing out on the plains eastward, and I believe the supply of water will accompany it.

Thomas urged that scientists and the Territorial and the Federal governments should give attention to this matter and suggested that a north-south railroad along the eastern slope of the mountains would best implement the theory (p. 141–142). His report to the United States Commissioner of Agriculture for the same year, 1869, declared:

> The so-called Great American Desert, the monument of geographical ignorance and prejudice of the past, has shrunk to so small proportions before the progress of later discoveries, that it is now questioned whether there is any portion of our national territory that cannot, by improved processes of culture, be made the home of a large civilized population (p. 617).

[2] J. D. Whitney, "Physical Geography," in Iowa Geological Survey, *Report on the Geological Survey of the State of Iowa*, vol. 1, pt. 1, ch. 1 (Des Moines, 1858).

By 1872, Thomas was less sanguine than some about favorable climatic change and objected to the over-optimistic claims of land speculators and others. It was a duty to speak plainly, he declared, because the facts were favorable enough without misrepresentations. Pending a final report on climatic data then being collected, he stated two questions for consideration. Since the last geological change, was the trend from wet to dry still taking place, or had change ceased and a reversal already begun? He was vague in his language but apparently was convinced that his meteorological data would lead to a favorable conclusion for his proposed treatise on climatology.

Irrigation. In 1869, 1870, and 1872, Thomas divided the country west of the line of rain-moistened land theoretically into three types of land use: irrigable, pastoral, and timber land. In 1870 he proposed that these areas be laid down on a map, accompanied by proper descriptions for the guidance of immigration (p. 191). For agricultural purposes, he said in 1869: "With a very few exceptions irrigation is necessary throughout Colorado and New Mexico." During 1868 and 1869, because of unusually wet seasons at some points, irrigation had not been used, "but, as a rule, it is necessary throughout Colorado, and in making up estimates of the expense of farming in this Territory this item should always be counted" (p. 149).

In his report of 1869, Thomas was thinking independently and boldly, though not necessarily rashly about irrigation.

> This necessity is generally classed among the drawbacks to the agriculture of these territories, but there is some doubt as to the correctness of this conclusion, for, when we take into consideration the fact that where rain is depended upon there are frequently great losses incurred because of dry seasons, the question arises, "Is the loss by drought greater or less than the cost of irrigation?" The decision of this question must decide the point as to whether irrigation is really a drawback or not. That it is inconvenient and imposes a hardship upon the farmer of limited means, at the opening or settling of his farm, is true. But when his primary ditch is completed, if properly made, he may feel himself forever secure from loss through drought. . . . In my more extended report, . . . I propose to take up this subject of irrigation more fully, as it seems to hang somewhat as an incubus over western agriculture, at least in the minds of those living in sections supplied with rain. Yet when it is considered in that broad view corresponding to the vast extent of our country, it will be seen that it is one item in the series of variety necessary to the complete prosperity of the nation—one link in the grand chain necessary to render us independent as a nation (p. 149–150).

On the subject of costs of irrigation, Thomas was cautious enough not to commit himself, pointing out that such figures as were available were too variable to be of value (p. 150). The next year, 1870, he continued the discussion by urging Hayden to broaden the scope of data to be assembled for areas yet to be covered and to fill gaps in the data for areas already surveyed (p. 192). In almost the same words as in 1869 he declared: "As water is, therefore, the great desideratum in the agricultural development of this country, in the method of its distribution we shall find the true key to the agricultural systems of the West . . ." (p. 195).

Of the irrigation projects built and planned in Colorado, Thomas chose a few for brief comment (1870), but the one that was most significant from the standpoint of strategy, as he envisioned western development, was presented as follows:

> The Kansas Pacific Railroad Company contemplate running a canal from the mouth of Platte Cañon to some point near the head-waters of the Republican Fork, a distance of one hundred and forty or one hundred and fifty miles. . . . If this great work is completed we may see ere long the irrigated lands brought close to the rain-moistened region; a belt of farms stretching from the Missouri River to the Rocky Mountains. Such a consummation is certainly desirable. The "Great American Desert" belted with fields of golden grain and pleasant homes would be a result not anticipated ten years ago, and the very mention of which is ridiculed by many now, but which those who carefully study the country do not concede as impossible (p. 217).

This kind of an east-west canal project fitted neatly into Thomas's plan already noted for a north-south railroad east of the mountains and for the occupation of the plains eastward from such a railroad with irrigation economy as a base. Thomas had read widely and had been thinking comparatively on these matters. He had studied George P. Marsh's epoch-making book, *Man and Nature*, and was applying to the American problem ideas and data from that work (p. 258–261).[3]

[3] For the historical significance, on a world scale, of Marsh's book, *Man and Nature*, see J. R. Whitaker, "World View of Destruction and Conservation of

During 1871 Thomas went to California to view the progress in irrigation there. "I desired especially to learn what was being done in the way of lifting water." He was unable to find any important collection of statistics on the subject but reported:

> The wind-mill appears to be nearly the only power used for the purpose of lifting water, and as the quantity raised by each [windmill] is small it is apparent that these cannot be profitably used for field crops, especially where they compete with the products of rain-moistened regions. But as auxiliaries to horticulture they are valuable, wherever the water is to be found in quantity at a short distance from the surface . . . (p. 208).

Thomas was disappointed in what he found in the agricultural districts of California: "I am convinced that the agricultural resources of this great State will never be properly developed until a more thorough system of irrigation is adopted" (p. 208).

Having viewed the West from northern New Mexico northward to Montana and westward to California, Thomas concluded that irrigation was essential west of the one hundredth meridian.

> We also know from history of those countries where irrigation is extensively practiced that it is absolutely necessary that the State shall take more or less control of this matter, upon which its prosperity, and, in fact, perpetuity rests. We may therefore predict, with confidence, that the day is not far distant when the States and Territories in the district where irrigation is necessary will have to take absolute control of the system of irrigation or keep a watchful eye over it and guard it well by laws, regulations, restrictions, &c. (p. 226).

Thomas thought that this assumption was of paramount importance to the general government as well as to the States and Territories.

> . . . it will cause much difficulty and inconvenience to lay aside one system and adopt another. This is, therefore, a matter well worthy the consideration of our national legislators while the Territories remain their wards; and if they can place these on the right footing now, it will greatly tend to accelerate their growth and prosperity. But the question is asked, How are they to do this? Is it possible for them to do this in accordance with their constitutional powers and without undue expense to the National Government? I am of the opinion there is a method by which this can be done, and I herewith submit the plan in a few words.
>
> Let the General Government grant to the States and Territories in the region where irrigation is necessary—say, for example, all lying west of the one hundredth meridian, or perhaps the ninety-ninth, every alternate section of public land, with the condition that it be devoted entirely to the construction of irrigating canals and carrying on a system of irrigation. And the law making such grant should expressly reserve water privileges to those who may settle upon and occupy the remaining sections. By expressly providing that these lands should be applied solely to this purpose, it will be apparent to any one what an immense impetus it would give to the development of the agricultural resources of this section. All of the available water would thus be brought into use, and the reserved lands would also much sooner be brought into demand, as they would be as much entitled to the benefit of this measure as the lands thus granted. And in order to secure the grant from any improper diversion from the object contemplated in the grant, the law should provide that the States and Territories should refund to the General Government the value, at the minimum price, of all lands which the legislatures of these States and Territories should appropriate to any other purpose. The law should further provide that the grant should not include any portion of the reserved lands in lieu of those which might be occupied at the time of its passage, but should include only those employed. It should also provide that these State and territorial governments should not use any of the proceeds of these lands so granted for the payment of officers and other expenses of such registers, receivers, &c., as would necessarily have to be incurred in the sale &c., of these lands, but should limit the application of the funds arising under this grant to the expenses belonging strictly to the system of irrigation (p. 226–227).

Mineral lands were not to be included in this proposed grant to the States, and timber lands were excluded also, except on condition that half of the timber might be granted with the proviso that the State or Territory in which such timber was located assume the responsibility to guard and preserve the other half (p. 227).

Soil and Fertility. One of the fixed assumptions of forest man during the middle years of the nineteenth century was that the soil of the mid and low rainfall grassland and of the deserts was

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Natural Resources," Association of American Geographers, *Annals*, 30:143–162 (1940). Marsh's book was published in three American and one Italian editions. Hayden's staff seems to have been much influenced by Marsh's book and cited it on more than one occasion.

sterile. There were several theories extant by which this alleged sterility was explained, and among remedies suggested was the use of gypsum to supply a supposed lime deficiency. This theory helps to explain the unusual interest in the Permian problem as the rock formations of that geological age contained the most extensive gypsum beds and seemed to fulfill the teleological hypothesis of compensations in nature. Thomas was among those who became convinced of the error of the sterility theory not only for some but all western soils. He did not attempt to explain, however, as Eugene W. Hilgard was to do very soon, why the soils of low rainfall areas were fertile. So far as he had any theory, it was based upon the physical origin of soil materials. In his report on the agricultural capabilities of the territories made in 1869 to the United States Commissioner of Agriculture, Thomas doubted whether any portion "is and must ever be absolutely worthless" (p. 601).

In 1869 Thomas described the soil of the Platte River district as "chiefly a light loam," the product of the mixing of materials from all geological formations of the Rocky Mountains carried out by rivers and "The atmospheric currents driving to and fro the lighter and dry particles on the surface, have assisted in the mingling process"—in other words, dust storms.

> This combination of the various mineral elements gives to the soil an adaptability to a large variety of plants. The predominance of silicious matter renders it peculiarly adapted to the growth of wheat and oats, and the addition of decayed vegetable materials causes it to produce heavy crops of succulent and bulbous vegetables (p. 139).

As Thomas considered irrigation the key to the agricultural development of this region, he noted particularly the behavior of the soil under water.

> It might be supposed that when fields have been overflowed for some days with water, the land, after the water was drawn off, would assume that condition termed "baked;" but nature generally furnishes a counterpoise to all her apparent aberation; and, following this rule, she has here suited the soil to the climatic conditions, and hence this anticipated state does not follow irrigation (p. 150).

In developing his ideas of regional difference from the East, Thomas pointed out the next year (1870):

> . . . the criteria by which we judge of the fertility and productiveness of the soil, and of its adaptation to given products, (except, perhaps, the strictly chemical test,) do not hold good here. The pale appearance of the soil, the barren look and stunted growth of a spot, are by no means conclusive evidences of its sterility, for the application of water may show it to be rich in vegetative force. Plants which are considered as incompatible in other sections are often here found growing side by side, while others usually associated are here never, or but seldom, found together. Even the constants—latitude and elevation—cannot always be taken as true indices of temperature and vegetable life, on account of strong counteracting local influences (p. 192–193).

In further elaboration of his theme in 1870, Thomas declared:

> Startling as the statement may appear to those who have swept across the continent along the barren-looking track of the Union Pacific Railroad, I assert it as my firm conviction that there are but few lands in all this portion of the country which are really unproductive; that wherever there is soil, if water can be applied to it, it will be found rich in all the primary elements necessary to the production of useful crops of some kind. Without water as a matter of course it cannot be made to yield, and the crops produced will vary with the climate; but these facts do not affect the position I take in regard to the primitive fertility of the soil.
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> As I have heretofore stated that the tests of fertility in the rain-moistened regions would not apply here, the question may be asked, Upon what is the assertion based that this soil possesses the elements of productiveness? Upon numerous experiments, the only means I know by which I could have been convinced of the fact.
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> It is only after a careful examination of a vast number of experiments made in New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, &c., that I am forced to acknowledge what I before did not believe, viz: *that wherever there is soil in these regions, it is rich in the primary elements of fertility* (p. 194).

In 1872 Thomas called attention to the claims of Nebraska residents "that the subsoil is well adapted to sustain droughts by its capability of absorbing moisture, yet it is also true that the evaporative power of the air is greater than is usually supposed" (p. 309).

Forests as the Source of Building Materials. Among the natural resources considered essential in the occupation of a country, forests occupied a key position. Thomas recorded (1869) that "considerable quantities of pine are found on the

hills which occasionally traverse the plains, and on the foot-hills which flank the mountains," that timber of good size and water power to saw it were found in the mountains, and that there was some scrubby oak but none of sufficient size for domestic purposes. The last named deficiency, he considered of special significance—"an entire lack of the harder wood necessary in the manufacture of agricultural and other implements. This, unless it can be grown, must always be supplied from other sections." About the future supply of soft timber he was not optimistic, because it was limited in quantity, except in the mountains proper, and even there it was not inexhaustible. He found that mining and other uses were already depleting the supply near settlements even though many houses were built of adobe. That some would challenge his views, he admitted, but insisted that "Even now, sawed lumber has frequently to be hauled for seventy-five to one hundred miles, and even further; but the building of railroads will greatly reduce the expense of transportation." The supply of fencing material was not easily met, and near Denver wire was being used. This appeared to him to be the cheapest kind of fence, unless hedge growing should prove successful. His emphasis on timber shortages was actuated, he admitted, by a desire to induce the early adoption of a program of tree planting (p. 148–151).

By the time of his visit to California in 1871, Thomas had made the circuit of most of the West. In transmitting his report for that year, he admitted that "I was surprised to learn no hard wood fit for wheelwright purposes, and agricultural and other machinery, was to be found on the Pacific coast" (p. 208).[4] Visits to wagon shops revealed that their supplies of hardwood were secured from the Atlantic coast. With respect to the absence of hardwood, Thomas reported:

> I have ascertained this was the fact in regard to the Territories of the Rocky Mountain region, but was not aware before that it was the case in regard to the Pacific coast. It may perhaps, without exaggeration, be said that proper timber for a wagon cannot be found in the United States west of the one hundredth meridian. As this places the States and Territories of the Pacific slope under considerable disadvantage in this respect, it seems to me that the General Government ought to take some steps to remedy the defect as far as possible (p. 208).

Thomas found that the problem of hardwood and heavy timber had been discussed by C. F. Reed, president of the California Board of Agriculture, and he reprinted Reed's material (p. 218–223). It is of interest and considerable importance for the history of ideas that Reed, as well as Thomas, was under the influence of George P. Marsh's ideas concerning the relations of man and the earth. Reed had estimated that trees for heavy timber occupied not more than one-twentieth and other timber, including heavy timber, about one-eighth of the area of the State. Thomas took the estimate of one-twentieth as representative of the whole area west of the one hundredth meridian. Reed pointed out that timber for ship building and other heavy construction was particularly limited and that, at the existing rate of consumption, it would be exhausted in forty years. If population doubled, it would be exhausted in twenty years. South of California there was little timber on the Pacific coast. Reed estimated that California and the country south of it was already drawing upon the Northern Pacific coast at such a rate as to exhaust its supplies in about twenty years. In California, lumber costs were so heavy that in Reed's opinion "our farmers are among the poorest housed people of any agricultural community in the Union where the country has been settled an equal length of time" (p. 221). He attributed extreme fluctuations of weather to the cutting of timber and insisted that new tree growth was difficult without irrigation and that land once cut-over in California "always remains naked." At the end of the Reed quotation, Thomas commented: "Strike out the local names from this quotation, and almost every statement in it will apply with equal force to the entire Rocky Mountain region." As he saw it the only hope was for every State and Territory to inaugurate a tree-planting program both as a means of supplying timber needs and of changing the climate in a favorable direction (p. 223).

Railroads and Fuel. Railroads occupied a conspicuous place in Thomas's thinking about the West. This was more or less common to all,

[4] A. W. Küchler, "The Broadleaf Deciduous Forests of the Pacific Northwest," Association of American Geographers, *Annals*, 36:122–147 (1946). Küchler did not arrive at any definite conclusion as to why only negligible quantities of deciduous trees grew in the forests of the Pacific Northwest.

however, who gave much thought to problems of the low-rainfall grassland and deserts. Thomas's report of 1872 was particularly significant concerning the communications problem.

> As the immense belt under consideration is one almost continuous prairie, devoid of forests, which must be devoted almost wholly to farming and pastoral pursuits, it is apparent that its future development depends to a great degree upon the means of transporting its products to market and of reaching the forests of the States lying east of it (p. 279).

He committed himself in 1869 to the assumption that Colorado possessed all the coal it needed. "In regard to the study of fuel, the difficulty of supplying this want will doubtless be met when the various coal mines are opened, and railroads traverse the country" (p. 151). In discussing California's fuel in 1871, Thomas used Reed's prediction: "Considering the probable increase of population, it is very doubtful whether, under present management, they will be able to supply their own demands for fuel for ten years to come." Although heavy building timber could bear long-distance transportation charges, Reed pointed out that fuel wood could be shipped only short distances; that within 20 miles of San Francisco there was plenty of wood at $2 per cord, but freight made it cost $10 per cord in the city. Railroad consumption of wood ran into prohibitive figures in terms of the fuel wood supply, and it was clear that Reed did not see much prospect of California being able to assume her rightful position as a manufacturing State without fuel (p. 220). On these points Thomas adopted Reed's conclusions as his own.

In dealing with southeastern Dakota Territory in 1872, Thomas emphasized the deficiency of fuel and commented that railroads would supply this need partially when connected with the timber districts of Minnesota, but fuel could scarcely be secured at a rate the farmers could pay. Coal could be brought in also, but again he pronounced it too costly. Among substitutes for wood and coal, the study of tree and corn growing for fuel purposes was suggested (p. 308). It is evident that lignite as fuel had not made much impression upon him.

Cereals and Livestock. The crops of the West as recognized by Thomas in 1869 were the cereals, especially wheat. Spring varieties were raised almost exclusively, not because winter wheat would not grow, but because the soil was usually too dry and hard in the fall to permit preparation for fall planting. In Colorado, he reported that "The White Sonora is most prized on account of the beautiful white flour it makes, and its heavy yield . . ." (p. 144). In New Mexico the favorite variety was a white wheat similar to the White Sonoran. On account of the dryness of the climate, the wheat kernel was hard as in California, "requiring to be moistened before grinding." Thomas concluded:

> I think I am justified in saying that no part of the Union can produce better flour than Eastern Colorado, in respect to its clear, pearly whiteness, richness in gluten, and ease with which it is converted into bread; and, like the flour of the Pacific Coast, it will doubtless bear transportation to any part of the world without damage from climatic influences (p. 144).

Corn was only moderately successful in Colorado and New Mexico, and the one variety was Mexican. Thomas thought that better varieties might be found (p. 143–146).

In 1870 Thomas expressed even more forcibly his confidence in cereal growing.

> And, if I am not wholly mistaken, that which has by some been ridiculed as a barren cactus plain will produce crops of cereals that will rival the heaviest yield of the richest lands of the States. I may be mistaken, but will cling to the opinion, until contradicted by fair experiments, that the uplands or ridges of this section, when properly irrigated and cultivated, will produce better wheat than the creek bottoms (p. 217).

In attempting to answer the question of how the plains could be made useful to man, two inquiries were specified in 1870. How much of it could be irrigated, and how much of the remainder could be used profitably as pastoral lands? His answer to the latter question was that "the extent of the pastoral lands is fully equal to all the demands, for grazing purposes, of the population that will ever occupy this region" (p. 257). As in the case of many another forest man unacquainted with native grass, Thomas was constantly amazed that the grass of the plains provided feed the entire year, and in his report of 1869 to the United States Commissioner of Agriculture called attention to this fact (p. 603). In 1871 Montana became his favorite candidate for livestock production.

> Without injustice to any other part of the West, it may truly be said of Montana that it is the best grazing

section of the Rocky Mountain region.... Here, as in other parts of the western country, as is well known, the grass cures on the ground instead of rotting, remaining in this state all winter, furnishing, in fact, a better food than if cut and cured (p. 269).

In reporting on the northern plains, especially Dakota Territory, in 1872, Thomas claimed:

...it presents a bread-producing area equaled by but few and surpassed by none on the continent. Its capacity as a wheat-growing section is immense; so great, in fact, that the figures stagger our belief when first presented. As a beef-producing section its resources are great, the grazing excellent throughout the entire area (p. 276).

Conclusion. Any conclusion concerning the significance of Thomas's reports must rest upon recognition of two aspects, namely his immediate and his remote influence. Direct evidence on the former is contained in Thomas's letter transmitting his report of 1871 to Hayden.

It is an interesting fact that those sections of the West which have been described in your reports have received, during the past year, the greater portion of the emigration that crossed the plains. While this has, no doubt, been owing to a number of causes, yet we are justified in believing that your efforts and investigations have helped to bring about this result, and that in this fact you have an evidence of the appreciation of your labors (p. 209).

In view also of the fact that Thomas's reports on agriculture constituted part of his chief's reports, his compliment to Hayden reflected back upon his own efforts. Another kind of evidence of public interest is found in the demand for the Hayden reports which was sufficient to exhaust the supply, and in 1873 the first three (1867, 1868, 1869) were reissued in one volume. In contrast with his reports to the United States Commissioner of Agriculture, Thomas's reports to Hayden were the product of personal observation and investigation which stimulated and challenged his natural independence of mind to express itself in creative interpretation. He is eminently entitled to a place among the pioneers who made a substantial beginning in thinking of the low-rainfall grassland and the desert of the West in terms of their positive characteristics and regional adequacy rather than according to the traditional forest man's idea of deficiency. Of course, Thomas did not achieve a complete mental transformation. In some respects, however, the change was all but complete, and, in general, he went further than most of his contemporaries who were adventuring in this region of new ideas and practices. Historians of the twentieth century who have not discovered Thomas may profit in their understanding of the history of the Trans-Mississippi West by thinking his thoughts after him.

THE CATTLE HERDS AND RANCHES OF THE OREGON COUNTRY, 1860–1890

J. ORIN OLIPHANT

Department of History, Bucknell University

In the intermountain area of the Pacific Northwest—that vast stretch of country lying between the Rockies on the east and the Cascades on the west, and between the forty-second parallel on the south and the forty-ninth on the north—the breeding of cattle on open ranges or ranches was a business of importance from the beginning of the 1860s to the end of the 1880s. It was important, indeed, in some portions of this country for long years after 1890; but by the time that Washington and Idaho had achieved statehood (1889 and 1890) the breeding of cattle on open ranges had virtually ceased to exist in all portions of the Pacific Northwest that were suited for agriculture. By that time cattle breeding in the old Oregon Country was rapidly becoming an aspect of diversified agricultural operations.

Broadly speaking, the cattle country of the Pacific Northwest during the period covered by this study was divided into two regions. One of these, the Columbia Basin proper, comprising roughly eastern Washington, the panhandle of Idaho, and northeastern Oregon, was in reality an economic province. The other, and the larger, of these regions, comprising southeastern Oregon and that portion of Idaho lying south of the Salmon River Mountains, was physiographically and economically somewhat apart from the Columbia Basin. It was, in fact, the northern portion of a widely extended cattle province that had for its capital a small town situated on the Humboldt River, in northwestern Nevada—Winnemucca, a busy shipping point on the Central Pacific Railroad. The cattle country of the Pacific Northwest

was not, therefore, a unified economic region delimited by the original boundaries of the Territory of Oregon.

From the fact that this intermountain country was so divided emerged consequences, political as well as economic, of no slight importance. Politically, such division was important because the boundaries of neither of the above-mentioned regions coincided with the boundaries of any State or Territory. For this reason, together with the fact that the cattlemen's interests, whether in Washington, Oregon, or Idaho, competed in State or Territorial legislatures with other economic interests, no session of a law-making body in the entire Oregon Country could be made a meeting time, for legislative purposes, of a cattlemen's association. Economically, this division was important because the problems of the cattlemen of one of these regions differed, in degree if not in kind, from those of the cattlemen of the other region. In the Columbia Basin, for example, cattle breeding was on a smaller scale than in southeastern Oregon and on the Snake River Plains, and in the former region there was more arable land to invite the farmer than there was in either portion of the latter. Furthermore, within each of these regions there were districts, distinguished one from another by topography, soil, and climate; and so emphatically was this condition true of the Columbia Basin that there all the cooperative enterprises of the cattlemen became local rather than regional in scope. For these reasons, therefore, if for no other, the existence of two fairly distinct regions in the intermountain area of the Pacific Northwest must never be forgotten if one wishes to understand the history of the range-cattle industry in the Oregon Country.

From the earliest days of the white man's penetration of the Pacific Northwest, this intermountain country was heralded as one that was almost ideally suited for pastoral purposes—a country on whose hills and in whose valleys cattle might roam by thousands; and as the years went by this opinion was uttered again and again.[1] However ill-adapted much of the land of this country might be to the purposes of the farmer, there was nearly everywhere in this vast area vegetation adequate to sustain much animal life. Of greatest importance to prospective stockmen was the so-called bunch grass, which grew in profusion, especially in the uplands. As late as the summer of 1868, the surveyor general of Washington Territory could write:

> . . . the crowning glory of the vegetable kingdom in the [Columbia] basin is the "bunch grass," popularly so called from its growth in bunches or tufts, between which the surface is naked and more or less depressed according to the nature of the soil, the light particles having been scooped up and driven away by the prevailing winds. Prevailing in greatest abundance everywhere, rich and nutritious above all other grasses, and retaining its nutritive qualities after being dried up by the heats and droughts of the climate, it already affords sustenance to thousands of horses, cattle, and sheep, which may be increased to millions without overstocking the country. This at present is the great resource of the basin, and the Columbia valley has been termed, not inaptly, the grazier's paradise.[2]

In southeastern Oregon, as late as 1880, the "prevailing and best grass" was the bunch grass; and generally throughout Idaho this grass, with other grasses, was more or less abundant.[3] Also,

[1] Letter from John Ball, dated at Fort Vancouver, Feb. 23, 1833, *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 3:102 (1902); John K. Townsend, *Narrative of a Journey Across the Rocky Mountains*. . . (Philadelphia, 1839), 171; Sir George Simpson, *An Overland Journey Round the World During the Years 1841 and 1842* (Philadelphia, 1847), 1:108, 144; Joseph Williams, *Narrative of a Tour from the State of Indiana to the Oregon Territory in the Years 1841-2* (New York, 1921), 72; Alvan F. Waller to his brother, Apr. 6, 1842, *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 4:178 (1903); Letter from Peter H. Burnett, dated at "Falatine Plains," Oregon, Nov. 4, 1844, *Niles' National Register*, 68:393 (Aug. 23, 1845); *The Polynesian* (Honolulu), Jan. 25, Mar. 1–15, 1845; Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition*. . . (Philadelphia, 1845), 4:437; H. H. Spalding to Joel Palmer, Apr. 7, 1846, in Joel Palmer, "Journal of Travels over the Rocky Mountains," *Early Western Travels, 1748–1846*, ed. by Reuben G. Thwaites, 30:284–290 (Cleveland, 1906); *The Columbian* (Olympia, Wash.), Nov. 13, 1852; A. N. Armstrong, *Oregon*. . . (Chicago, 1857), 40; W. P. Winans, in U. S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Report*, 1870, 487.

[2] S. Garfield[e] to Joseph S. Wilson, July 31, 1868, in U. S. General Land Office, *Report of the Commissioner*, 1868, 339. See also J. Ross Browne, *Report on the Mineral Resources of the States and Territories West of the Rocky Mountains* (Washington, 1868), 548, 555, 567; and H. N. Moseley, *Oregon: Its Resources, Climate, People and Productions* (London, 1878), 384, quoting Philip Ritz.

[3] Clarence W. Gordon, "Report on Cattle, Sheep, and Swine, Supplementary to Enumeration of Live

due to topographic and climatic differences, the vegetation throughout this entire intermountain country was greatly varied, so that some lands could be used as summer ranges and others as winter ranges. Generally speaking, the bunch grass provided the principal forage on the summer ranges, whereas other grasses and various browse feeds prevailed in certain valleys and in desert-like regions to which herds resorted for winter grazing.[4]

Perhaps the most prized of all the plants used for winter forage was the white sage, which grew abundantly in southeastern Oregon and in southern Idaho. Of this plant, as he had observed it growing in the Winnemucca province, the surveyor general of Nevada wrote in 1872:

> It has neither the taste nor smell of the common sage; it has an acrid quality until it has been touched by the frost, after which it is as succulent and sweet as young clover. The average height of the bush is about one foot; the leaf is similar to that of the *artemisia*, of a delicate green color, and covered with a white down. It blossoms in August, and bears a small, globular white flower. Sometimes the sage grows in isolated patches of a few acres, and again it covers tracts containing thousands of acres. After the occurrence of frosts, horses, cattle, and sheep feed upon it with greedy avidity. It possesses great value for winter feeding.[5]

A country so well endowed with vegetation and so well supplied, as it appeared to be, with streams and water holes, would, when its occupation was economically justified, certainly prove an attractive one to stockmen, and especially so if its climate was so mild as to allow livestock to get through the winters with little or no care. On the subject of winters the evidence was as reassuring as it was on that of vegetation, the testimony from the 1830s onward being such as to warrant the belief that Oregon was a stockmen's paradise. Much of this testimony, it is true, related to conditions in western Oregon, where the Hudson's Bay Company had successfully bred cattle at Fort Vancouver and Nisqually and where missionaries and early settlers had raised livestock in the Willamette Valley.[6] But even as early as the 1830s some small-scale breeding of cattle had been carried on in the Columbia Basin, and here too it was observed that cattle and other livestock, though generally uncared for, could get through the winters with little difficulty.[7] It should not be surprising, therefore, that the notion struck root that cattle everywhere in the Oregon Country could safely roam the hills and valleys the whole year through, while stockmen smoked their pipes, fondled their poker chips, and worried little if at all. So great a feeling of security was hardly warranted, as many a cattleman was to learn to his sorrow; but the evidence is abundant that J. Ross Browne expressed the prevailing sentiment of men of the Pacific Northwest when, in 1868, he wrote as follows:

> It may certainly be said of the upper Columbia basin, considering its altitude and high latitude, its climate is remarkable for mildness. On the open prairie the snow, never deep, seldom covers the ground a week at a time; in the heavy timber and in sheltered places it remains much longer on the surface. It is seldom essential to house or feed stock, though occasional severe winters serve as warnings to provide food and shelter. One or two months' feed is the extent which necessity ever requires in the heaviest winters. The Indians, who own extensive bands of horses, take no precaution, sometimes shifting their camps for better grass, and they seldom lose stock by occasion of severity of winter. A noticeable concomitant of the winter of the upper Columbia is the Chenook [*sic*] wind; it is a warm current, more properly a gale, occasionally, during the winter months, blowing up through the channel of the Columbia from the southwest. A few hours' continuance will remove every vestige of snow from the earth over which it sweeps.[8]

Stock on Farms in 1880," U. S. Census Office, 10th Census, 1880, *Report on the Productions of Agriculture*, 3:1079, 1094–1098, and *passim* (hereafter, this report is referred to as: Gordon, "Report"); "Report of the Public Lands Commission," 46 Congress, 2 Session, 1879–80, *House Executive Document 46*, 331, 629 (Serial 1923); U. S. Geological Survey, *Bulletin 199* (Washington, 1902), 22, 32; Israel C. Russell, "A Geological Reconnaissance in Southern Oregon," U. S. Geological Survey, *Annual Report*, 1882–83, 435, 437.

[4] Gordon, "Report," 1079–1098, *passim; Oregon and Washington Farmer* (Portland, Oregon), December 1882, p. 9; *Weekly Intelligencer* (Seattle, Wash.), May 17, 1873; "Report of the Public Lands Commission," 46 Congress, 2 Session, 1879–80, *House Executive Document 46*, 466; U. S. General Land Office, *Report of the Commissioner*, 1870, 437.

[5] U. S. General Land Office, *Report of the Commissioner*, 1872, 176. See also William H. Brewer, "Pasture and Forage Plants," U. S. Census Office, 10th Census, 1880, *Report on the Productions of Agriculture*, 3:963.

[6] See the references in footnote 1.

[7] *Ibid.* See also Nathaniel J. Wyeth, "Memoir," Feb. 4, 1839, in 25 Congress, 3 Session, 1838–39, *House Supplemental Report 101*, appendix, 15–16 (Serial 351).

[8] Browne, *Report on the Mineral Resources*, 560.

Should a considerable demand for beef arise in the Pacific Northwest, the occupation of grazing lands so inviting as these could be expected to proceed rapidly, for a source of supply for stocking them was nearby. An incentive for such occupation was provided by the swarming of miners into the Far Northwest, and the area from which cattle were obtained for stocking was western Oregon; for here, and particularly in the Willamette Valley, cattle had been accumulating for some three decades, slowly at first but rapidly since the beginning of the 1840s. Some of these cattle were of Spanish origin and had come up from California. They were scrawny animals, remarkable not so much for the richness of their milk and the tenderness of their flesh as for their general toughness and their long horns. However, for the most part the cattle of Oregon were of a better sort as they were from American stock that had come over the plains with successive caravans that were Oregon-bound.[9] Isolated in the remote Northwest, with virtually no outside market before the gold rushes set California astir, cattlemen in Oregon had watched their herds increase. Western Oregon, accordingly, became the cattle nursery of the Pacific Northwest. With the opening of mining camps in the Far Northwest from 1858 onward, cattle began to move out of this nursery. Down Puget Sound to British Columbia, up the Columbia River, and through the mountain passes they moved, northward and eastward, to supply the wants of miners.[10] And so great were these wants that cattlemen began to seek larger pastures for larger herds. Thus began the pastoral occupation of the Columbia Basin, southeastern Oregon, and southern Idaho, and thus began an eastward movement of cattle and other livestock from western Oregon that was to continue for three decades or more.[11]

The Census of 1860 reveals that the pastoral occupation of Oregon and Washington east of the Cascades had barely begun, for at this time only a few thousand cattle were reported for Wasco County in Oregon and a few thousand more for Klickitat, Walla Walla, and Spokane counties in Washington.[12] But thereafter such occupation proceeded apace. The Klickitat and Yakima countries, the Walla Walla country, and northeastern Oregon were soon overrun with cattle, and presently some stockmen were driving their cattle to grasslands in southeastern Oregon and southern Idaho, while others were moving their cattle northward to lay hold of the splendid ranges in the country between the Snake and the Spokane rivers. Thus, by the beginning of the 1870s, the intermountain country of the Pacific Northwest had become pretty generally a cattleman's country, though here and there farmers were cultivating the soil.[13]

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[9] On the early cattle breeding in the Pacific Northwest, see C. S. Kingston, "Introduction of Cattle into the Pacific Northwest," *Washington Historical Quarterly*, 14:163–185 (1923).

[10] J. Orin Oliphant, "The Cattle Trade on Puget Sound, 1858–1890," *Agricultural History*, 7:129–149 (1933).

[11] Eastern Oregon and eastern Washington, it must be remembered, were not occupied *entirely* by an eastward movement of cattle from western Oregon. During many of the years of this eastward movement, cattle were entering the intermountain country from States east of the Rockies. A story published by the *Weekly Mountaineer* (The Dalles, Oregon), July 29, 1871, illustrates the "westward" movement of cattle: "We learn that Messrs. Perkins and Savage, of Yamhill county, who have just returned from Kansas, started from Abilene on the 6th inst., overland by the old emigrant road, with a drove of 4,200 head of Cherokee and Chickasaw cattle, bound for Eastern Oregon. They also purchased in Illinois, and put with the drove, ten blooded bulls. This is one of the largest droves ever passed across the plains at one time, and the enterprise speaks well for the proprietors, who are the most extensive cattle dealers in Oregon—*Herald*."

[12] U. S. Census Office, 8th Census, 1860, *Agriculture of the United States in 1860* (Washington, 1864), 129, 182.

[13] *Sacramento Daily Union* (Calif.), June 1, 1859, quoting the *Portland Daily News; Oregon Argus* (Oregon City), Aug. 16, 1862; *Weekly Mountaineer*, Aug. 31, 1866, July 30, 1869, Mar. 29, Apr. 5, Aug. 13, 1870; *Washington Standard* (Olympia), Aug. 13, 1870; *Washington Statesman* (Walla Walla), Nov. 1, 1862; *Owyhee Avalanche* (Silver City, Idaho), Nov. 2, 1867; *Oregon State Journal* (Eugene City), Feb. 29, June 27, 1868, Apr. 10, 1869; *Oregon Sentinel* (Jacksonville), Aug. 23, 1862; *Oregon Daily Unionist* (Salem), Aug. 3, 1869; *Walla Walla Statesman* (Wash.), Aug. 7, 1868; *Daily Mountaineer* (The Dalles, Oregon), Nov. 24, Nov. 29, Dec. 10, 1865; *Willamette Farmer* (Salem, Oregon), Mar. 9, 1872; *Walla Walla Union* (Wash.), June 1, 1872; W. H. Lever, comp., *An Illustrated History of Whitman County* [Washington], 247–304 *passim*; A. J. Splawn, *Ka-mi-akin, Last Hero of the Yakimas* (ed. 2, Portland, Oregon, 1944), 255–256, 259; U. S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Report*, 1867, 96, 99, 101; U. S. General Land Office, *Report of the Commissioner*, 1868,

A decade later, at the time of the Tenth Census, the day of the cattleman in the Columbia Basin was approaching its end. In the Walla Walla country the farmers were in the ascendant; in Klickitat and Yakima counties many of the ranges had been eaten close; and on the vast plain of the Columbia River, then the choicest grazing area of the entire Columbia Basin, a danger sign had been hoisted, for in the eastern part of this plain, on the rolling grass-clad hills of the rich Palouse country, farmers and cattlemen were disputing angrily about a herd law. In many places in the Columbia Basin, moreover, sheepmen were competing with cattlemen for the contracting ranges. Similar changes had taken place south of the Columbia, and Wasco and Umatilla counties in northeastern Oregon were no longer so attractive to cattlemen as they once had been.[14] But east of the Blue Mountains in the area of Oregon drained by tributaries of the Snake River, in most parts of southern Idaho, in southeastern Oregon—in brief, throughout the northern portion of the Winnemucca province—the situation was somewhat different. Here, as yet, the range-cattle business continued to flourish; farmers were not generally encroaching on the grazing lands and asking for protective legislation; and flocks of sheep had not yet become so great a menace to the cattle business as they were in some parts of the Columbia Basin.[15]

Of the cattle herds that grazed on the ranges of the intermountain country of the Pacific Northwest between 1860 and 1890, not much has been written; and little, if anything, has been told of the problems that confronted the men whose money was invested in these herds. It is the purpose of this article to deal briefly with the subject of cattle herds and their management in this country during the years mentioned above.

Information as to the size of the herds that grazed in the Columbia Basin, whether in eastern Washington or in northeastern Oregon, is fragmentary and inexact, but it appears that herds of great size were altogether exceptional. A sale of 12,000 head in the Okanogan country, reported to have been made in 1881 by Phelps & Wadleigh to Benjamin E. Snipes of The Dalles, was perhaps unique.[16] These men were, in the vernacular of the country, "cattle kings"; but other men in the Columbia Basin, men whose operations were on a lesser scale, were likewise spoken of as "cattle kings." Whatever the evidence examined—whether reports of sales, reports of movements of livestock, or estimates of cattle in a given locality—the result obtained is the same. Many herds consisted of only a few hundred head each, others numbered a thousand head each, a few were as large as 2,500 head or more, and only rarely was one as large as 5,000 head. The Yakima cattleman who described at length his operations for the Gordon Report of the Tenth Census claimed to possess no more than 2,000 head, and the Klickitat cattleman who likewise described his operations for that report laid claim to only 5,000 head. We may conclude, therefore, that in the Columbia Basin a man whose cattle numbered no more than 5,000 head might claim membership in a bovine royalty.[17]

Considerably different was the situation in the Winnemucca province. Here, indeed, there were

326–328; 1869, 385; 1872, 241. A typical statement describing this continuing movement is that of Ben Simpson, surveyor general of Oregon, on Aug. 1, 1874: "Great numbers of sheep and cattle are annually driven across the Cascade Range into the excellent pasture-lands of Eastern Oregon, and settlements are advancing everywhere along the rivers and lesser streams of that rich and uncultured region." U. S. General Land Office, *Report of the Commissioner*, 1874, 230.

[14] Gordon, "Report," 1079–1092 *passim*. See also *Morning Oregonian* (Portland), Sept. 30, 1882; Wallis Nash, *Two Years in Oregon* (New York, 1882), 120, 232; *Oregon and Washington Farmer*, April 1883 p. 12; *Willamette Farmer*, May 11, 1883; and the issues of the *Walla Walla Union* and the *Palouse Gazette* (Colfax, Wash.) for 1879 and 1880.

[15] The evidence is plentiful, however, that from the end of the 1870s onward sheep were multiplying fairly rapidly in southeastern Oregon and southern Idaho, to the disgust of cattlemen generally. See *Morning Oregonian*, Dec. 4, 1879, May 3, 1881, and Sept. 16, 1882, quoting the *Grant County News; Oregon and Washington Farmer*, November 1882, p. 7; and especially "Report of the Public Lands Commission," 46 Congress, 2 Session, 1879–80, *House Executive Document 46, passim*, which records the testimony of various persons in Oregon and Idaho.

[16] *Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman* (Boise City), Mar. 22, 1881; *Spokan Times* (Spokan Falls, Wash.), Mar. 31, 1881.

[17] *Weekly Mountaineer*, Feb. 24, 1872; *Washington Standard*, May 1, 1875; *West Shore* (Portland, Oregon), February 1879, p. 57; *Walla Walla Union*, Mar. 20, 1880; Gordon, "Report," 1089–1091; *Yakima Signal* (Wash.), Jan. 27, June 9, 1883; *Kittitas Standard* (Ellensburgh, Wash.), July 21, 1883.

many owners, particularly in the early years of occupation, whose herds were small, and here also were other owners whose herds ranged in size between small and large. But in this large province, due in part to the scarcity of arable land, a few men succeeded in accumulating herds of considerable size. In southeastern Oregon large herds were held in what is now Klamath and Lake counties, and even larger herds in what now comprises Harney, Grant, Baker, and Malheur counties.[18] In these last-named counties and in eastward-lying counties of Idaho were to be found some of the real cattle kings of the Pacific Northwest. Concerning the size of their holdings and the ramifications of their interests, we may judge by evidence from various sources: the successive accounts of the heavy movements of cattle to Winnemucca; the government reports concerning the trespassing of cattle on the Malheur Indian Reservation; the reports of purchases by which a few cattlemen extended their holdings; and the occasional descriptions of the ranches or ranges of the greatest of the cattle kings. Whatever the source of our knowledge, we need not long doubt the importance of the operations of men like Peter French and Dr. Hugh James Glenn, W. B. Todhunter and John S. Devine, Colonel James A. Hardin, J. C. Abbatt, Hock Mason, and others.

As the years went by, the tendency toward the consolidation of interests in southeastern Oregon became pronounced. About 1872 Peter French, son-in-law and partner of Dr. Hugh James Glenn, the "wheat king" of California, arrived in southeastern Oregon. Here, as early as 1879, he was managing two large ranches—the P Ranch and the Diamond Ranch—on a large range near Steens Mountain in what is now Harney County.[19] In 1882 French added to these holdings by purchasing for $102,000 the interest of John Catlow in the Steens Mountain area.[20] Dr. Glenn was shot to death in California in 1883, but French continued his operations in southeastern Oregon until he too, as the result of an altercation over land, was shot to death in 1897.[21]

More important even than the Glenn-French interests were those of Todhunter and Devine, whose headquarters were at their Whitehorse Ranch on Whitehorse Creek in the present Harney County. To this country, as early perhaps as 1868, came John S. Devine, who presently became a partner of W. B. Todhunter.[22] Of this partnership Todhunter was the member who pushed himself into public notice; more often than not he was mentioned as if he were the sole owner of what both he and his partner possessed. However that fact may be explained, the Todhunter-Devine interests expanded rapidly. In the autumn of 1880 these men bought for $65,000 the stock ranch of Abbatt & Whiteside near Fort Harney, and in the spring of 1882 they were said to possess more than 20,000 head of stock cattle, distributed among four ranches, three of which were in Oregon and one in northwestern Nevada. They were said to have branded 9,000 calves the preceding spring and to have marketed 6,000 head of beef cattle during the current season.[23] In the spring of 1883 they further increased their holdings by purchasing for $75,000 the cattle and ranges of G. B. Crowley and Captain Whiteside at Steens Mountain.[24] Others about this time credited them with even larger holdings, and there were complaints that both Todhunter and Glenn were monopolizing a vast area of Oregon.[25] Having suffered reverses, Todhunter was obliged to relinquish his holdings in May 1887. The deeds that he gave specified

[18] *Morning Oregonian*, Oct. 12, 1876, Sept. 26, 1877, Mar. 2, 1880, June 22, Aug. 22, 1882; Nash, *Two Years in Oregon*, 111; Hugh Small, *Oregon and Her Resources: From Personal Observation and Investigation* (San Francisco, 1872), 56. In 1885 it was reported that there were about 200,000 cattle in Grant County, Oregon, "some firms having as many as 40,000." *West Shore*, April 1885, p. 125.

[19] *Silver State* (Winnemucca, Nev.), Dec. 12, 1879. The Frenchglen post office, established near the P Ranch in the early 1920s, perpetuates with some inaccuracy of spelling the names of the two owners of this ranch. Lewis A. McArthur, *Oregon Geographic Names* (ed. 2, Oregon Historical Society, 1944), 216–217, 405. As an indication of the extent of their interests before 1880, it may be noted that Glenn and French were reported to have lost 500 horses by an Indian raid in 1878. *Morning Oregonian*, July 19, 1878.

[20] *Morning Oregonian*, Feb. 25, 1882; *Idaho Avalanche* (Silver City), Mar. 18, 1882.

[21] *Silver State*, Feb. 20, 1883; McArthur, *Oregon Geographic Names*, 216.

[22] *Ibid.*, 552. For an account of the dedication of the John Devine Monument in 1928, see *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 29:236–241 (1928).

[23] *Morning Oregonian*, Oct. 6, 1880; *Silver State*, March. 31, 1882.

[24] *Silver State*, Mar. 30, 1883.

[25] *Morning Oregonian*, Jan. 1, 1883; D. H. Stearns, *Oregon Papers, No. 11* (supplement to the *Daily Evening Telegram*, Portland, Oregon, 1882), 6.

43,000 head of cattle valued at $860,000 and other property in Oregon and elsewhere which, when combined with his cattle, was estimated to be worth $2,230,000.[26]

Men like Glenn and French, or Todhunter and Devine, were primarily Oregon cattle kings, with interests extending beyond the boundaries of that State. Other men with large holdings were cattle kings in other States with interests that extended into Oregon. Such, for example, was Colonel James A. Hardin, the Humboldt cattle king, who became a vice president of the National Stock Growers' Association and who owned properties in several counties of Oregon and other properties in Idaho, Nevada, and California.[27] Such also were Miller & Lux whose principal holdings were in California but who also acquired extensive properties in both Nevada and Oregon. In 1882 it was reported that these men had bought "Harper & McMahon's herd of 2000 cattle on the Malheur, Baker County; Leslie's herd on the Owyhee of about 4000; Dresler & Clara's herd on Burnt river of about 1000, and Chas. Becker's herd in Cow valley of about 1500"; and that, in addition to these, they were collecting as many small herds as they could get, "offering as much as $32 a head for three-year-old steers."[28] Seven years later came the culmination of the consolidating tendency in Oregon, when, in the early summer of 1889, it was "learned" in Winnemucca "that the Todhunter ranch and Miller & Lux and N. H. A. [Hock] Mason's ranches and cattle, all in Oregon, have been consolidated. The new firm comprises Miller & Lux, N. H. A. Mason and John [S.] Devine. W. B. Todhunter, who sold out recently, retires from the stock business in Oregon."[29] Shortly thereafter an editor in Cheyenne was informed that Miller & Lux had about 75,000 head of cattle in eastern Oregon and that they were removing therefrom 20,000 young steers to "maturing ranches" in California.[30] By this consolidation large Oregon holdings became part of an interstate enterprise which, according to a recent author,"comprised in their day the largest livestock enterprise in the world."[31]

Enlargement of enterprise and consolidation of holdings were also characteristic of the cattle business in large areas of southern Idaho during the 1880s. What was undoubtedly one of the largest of these enterprises was described in 1883 as follows:

> The greatest cattle range in the West is now owned by Sparks & Tinnin, of Tecoma, Nev., who have consolidated half a dozen large ranches into one. A year and a half ago they bought two ranches on [*sic*] Thousand Springs Valley, and made one of them. They bought a lot of land on Goose Creek, running up to Idaho. On the 4th of July they bought out Barley Harrel's ranch in [*sic*] Snake River, Idaho, for $900,000. This gives them a very safe and large breeding range, running for 50 miles on the Snake, where the winters are not severe, and cows will raise a large percentage of calves and a good ranch with hay and grain near the track, where they can drive their beef cattle in the fall and ship them at their leisure, no matter how hard the winter or how deep the snow may be. They have now 70,000 head of cattle, and they will brand 17,000 calves this fall. They are undoubtedly the largest of the cattle kings of the coast. . . .[32]

Elsewhere in Idaho Territory there were lesser, but important, cattle holdings. In October 1886 the editor of the *Idaho Weekly Statesman* observed that the cattle business had "grown to wonderful proportions of late years." "Where 1,000 head was formerly considered a large band," he continued, "now bands of 5,000, 10,000 and even 20,000 head are not uncommon."[33] In Owyhee County the cattle business was said to have reached its maximum development in 1889–90, when it was estimated that there were more than 100,000 head in that county. Of that number, 72,000 head were held in nine herds, ranging in size from 2,500 to 18,000 head. There was one herd of 18,000 head, one of 16,000 head, and one of 12,000

[26] *Silver State*, May 24, 1887; *Morning Oregonian*, May 23, 1887.

[27] *Silver State*, Dec. 14, 1885, quoting the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat*.

[28] *Walla Walla Union*, Sept. 9, 1882.

[29] *Stock Growers Journal* (Miles City, Mont.), June 1, 1889, quoting the *Silver State*.

[30] *Ibid.*, July 20, 1889, quoting the Cheyenne *Live Stock Journal*.

[31] Lewis A. McArthur, "Devine Monument Dedication," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 29:236 (1928).

[32] *Weekly Drovers Journal* (Chicago), Sept. 6, 1883, quoting the Reno, Nev., *Evening Gazette*. See also a Wyoming letter to the *Chicago Tribune*, July 7, 1883, quoted by the *Breeders' Journal* (Beecher, Ill.), 4:459 (August 1883).

[33] *Idaho Weekly Statesman*, Oct. 9, 1886. For a description of a ranch with 6,000 cattle on Raft River, Cassia County, Idaho, see *ibid.*, Apr. 26, 1884, quoting the Salt Lake *Tribune*.

head; and there were four herds of 5,000 head each.[34]

Difficult as it is to reach satisfactory conclusions as to cattle holdings in either the Columbia Basin or the Winnemucca cattle province, it is perhaps even more difficult to come by exact conclusions as to the quality of the herds anywhere in the Pacific Northwest. Were the range cattle of the Oregon Country of superior quality, "as good" as the cattle of Oregon and Washington a generation or two later,[35] or were they "sadly below par"?[36] This question can not be answered precisely, partly because of scanty information and partly because some of the testimony consists of generalizations based upon limited observations. There can be little doubt that the quality of Oregon cattle varied from time to time and from place to place, but there is much reason to believe that Oregon cattle in general soon became, and thereafter remained, much superior to the Spanish cattle which were the foundation of the first Willamette Valley herds.

Throughout the 1840s and 1850s, along with great numbers of ordinary American stock, some thoroughbred cattle came overland to Oregon.[37] As early as 1855, a company was formed in western Oregon for the purpose of importing blooded livestock.[38] Three years later there was established in Portland the *Oregon Farmer*, a magazine devoted to the interests of farmers and stockmen. By this magazine the cause of better stock breeding was efficiently promoted, the burden of its message being that the keeping of poor stock was uneconomical. In May 1859, the editor declared: "The time is now fully come when the raising of *Cayuse* horses and *Spanish* cattle *do* [*sic*] *not pay* in the Willamette Valley. Could this portion of the State be purged of the superabundance of this stock, which has now become a burden, rather than profit to our citizens, room would be given for better breeds, which are already fast being introduced, and the good work of improvement soon be fairly under way."[39] The "good work of improvement," however, proceeded slowly, since many Oregonians believed that cows were cows; but during the 1840s and 1850s enough shorthorn Durhams were imported to establish for that breed a preference that continued during the years that the range-cattle industry flourished in the Pacific Northwest.[40]

During the 1860s, the decade in which the cattle business was expanding rapidly in this intermountain country, the campaign for the improvement of herds continued, principally in the Willamette Valley. Superior cattle were exhibited at fairs, additional blooded cattle were imported, and conclusive proof seemed to have been furnished that the shorthorn Durhams were hardy stock when such a herd came safely across the plains in 1866.[41] By the end of the decade editorial support of better-bred cattle had been enlisted east of the Cascades in the person of the vigorous editor of The Dalles *Weekly Mountaineer*, who, in the course of his "boosting" an agricultural fair, wrote this choice bit:

> We know one man who declares that he cannot afford to raise good stock.—Now we ask him, how much more would it cost to raise a *number one* cow, than it does that miserable sway-backed, thin-flanked *abortion of a cow* that stands looking through that pair of pole bars, at the ghost of a deformed calf in his corral. . . . We believe that experience will show that the good stock costs even less in care and labor than that kind which

[34] *A Historical, Descriptive and Commercial Directory of Owyhee County, Idaho, January, 1898* (Silver City, Idaho), 13.

[35] This was the opinion of Daniel M. Drumheller, when, as an old man, he told of his early experiences in the Pacific Northwest. See *"Uncle Dan" Drumheller Tells Thrills of Western Trails in 1854* (Spokane, 1925), 66.

[36] This opinion of the cattle of Washington was expressed in the *Spokan Times*, May 22, 1879.

[37] See, in general, R. C. Geer, "Blooded Cattle in Oregon," *Willamette Farmer*, Dec. 30, 1871; and Thomas Cross, "Cattle in Oregon: Historical Sketch and Account of the Cattle Business at the Present Time," *ibid.*, Jan. 7, 1881. See also the issues of the *Oregon Farmer* for 1858–1859.

[38] "Articles of Organization and Agreement" of the Oregon Stock Importing Company were published in the *Weekly Oregonian*, Aug. 4, 1855. Wayman St. Clair of Benton County was president, and Ralph C. Geer of Marion County was vice president. The agent of the company was instructed to proceed to Ohio, Kentucky, and New York, and there to select a few young shorthorn Durham bulls and heifers and a few blooded sheep, which animals were to be sold in Oregon by public auction.

[39] *Oregon Farmer*, May 1859, p. 152.

[40] See footnote 37.

[41] *Oregon Farmer*, 1861–62, *passim*; *Walla Walla Statesman*, July 26, Oct. 11, 1867; Lewis F. Allen, "Improvement of Native Cattle," U. S. Commissioner of Agriculture, *Report*, 1866, 306.

has to be helped to rise every morning because of disease or scrubby origin.[42]

But more important than lively editorials on the subject of better cattle was the Reedville Stock-Breeding Farm, established early in the 1870s in Washington County, Oregon, 12 miles from Portland. The owner of this farm, Simeon G. Reed, specialized in the breeding of thoroughbred animals, and within a few years his stock had become widely distributed in the Pacific Northwest.[43] Other Oregonians imported blooded cattle during the 1870s, and during this decade several reports were published of the presence of thoroughbred bulls in eastern Oregon, eastern Washington, and southern Idaho.[44] As early as 1877, a Yakima Valley correspondent complained to the editor of the *Weekly Mountaineer* that in the East the view was widely but unjustly held that the range cattle of the Pacific Northwest were of inferior quality;[45] and, as if to justify this complaint, an English traveler in Oregon in that same year observed that the "horses and horned cattle of the State represent a good average stock, and are continually improved by the importation of blooded animals from Europe and the Eastern States through private enterprise."[46] Presently another Englishman, as well as a governor of Wyoming Territory, affirmed that Oregon cattle were much superior to Texas cattle and that higher prices were paid for them for stockers of ranges in Wyoming and elsewhere east of the Rockies than were paid for Texas cattle for that purpose.[47]

The survey of the cattle industry in the Pacific Northwest that was made for the Census of 1880 provides interesting information on this subject. It was then found that the thoroughbred bulls introduced into southeastern Oregon had improved somewhat the quality of cattle in that area but that difficulties inherent in the practice of open-range grazing had prevented extensive grading up. Some cattlemen would not cooperate, and others, though appreciating the advantage of having thoroughbred bulls on the ranges, held back for fear that their indifferent or tight-fisted competitors would reap where they had not sown.[48] In Idaho, cattle were generally of good quality at this time, showing few traces of Spanish or Texas strains. In Owyhee County they were of exceptionally good quality. The general improvement of the cattle in Idaho was attributed to the fact that several of the ranges were amply supplied with blooded bulls.[49] Similar conditions were

[42] *Weekly Mountaineer*, Sept. 17, 1870. The fair that was being boosted was the "First Annual Fair of the Columbia District Agricultural Society," held at The Dalles, Oregon, from Sept. 28 to Oct. 1, 1870. M. C. Nye of Hood River, Oregon, won all the prizes for thoroughbred cattle. *Ibid.*, Oct. 8, 1870.

[43] *Willamette Farmer*, Nov. 25, 1871, May 18, 1872, Apr. 24, May 21, 1875; *Weekly Mountaineer*, Feb. 22, 1873. Reed sold his Shorthorn bull calf, Central Pacific, to Dr. W. F. Tolmie of Victoria, Vancouver Island, for $1,000. *Ibid.*, Sept. 28, 1872. Later it was reported that Reed had sold 10 thoroughbred bulls to a man in British Columbia. *Ibid.*, Mar. 23, 1877.

[44] During the 1870s, the *Willamette Farmer* published many notices of such importations. See also *Weekly Mountaineer*, Jan. 6, 1872, Apr. 5, Nov. 15, 1873; *Walla Walla Union*, Aug. 24, 1872, Jan. 31, Apr. 18, May 2, 16, 1874, May 8, 1875; *Owyhee Avalanche*, May 25, 1872; and especially the *Willamette Farmer*, June 29, 1872.

[45] *Weekly Mountaineer*, May 19, 1877.

[46] Mosely, *Oregon: Its Resources*, 59.

[47] W. Baillie-Grohman, "Cattle Ranches in the Far West," *Fortnightly Review*, n. s., 28:447 (1880); 45 Congress, 3 Session, 1878–79, *House Executive Documents*, 9:1160 (Serial 1850), quoting Governor John W. Hoyt.

[48] Gordon, "Report," 1082, 1083. On the general character of the cattle of Oregon and Washington, this report says: "The neat stock of Oregon and Washington may be said to be more uniform in grade than the cattle of any other of the contiguous states and territories, having been less exposed to interbreeding with either the California or the Texas stock. In the past many bands of California cattle have entered Oregon. During 1871, 1872, and 1873 a few herds of Texas cattle were driven into Oregon. These failed to affect, to any noticeable extent, the character of Oregon cattle. American, that is native, cattle stock all the ranges occupied throughout the country, and up to 1874, when the pastures began to be overstocked, it was claimed that the average beef produced was superior in weight and quality to that grown on any other open pastures west of the Missouri river." *Ibid.*, 1080.

[49] *Ibid.*, 1096, 1097, 1098. Now and then a herd of Texas cattle was brought into southern Idaho. In 1869, for example, it was reported that "A party of Owyheeans, consisting of Con. Shea, Ed. Bass, Robert Enos, Miller and Bugbee, have returned with a large band of cattle from the Texas plains—some fourteen hundred head. The cattle are now being held on the Bruneau. . . ." *Owyhee Avalanche*, Oct. 9, 1869. The attitude of one editor of the Pacific Northwest toward the bringing of Texas cattle into the Oregon Country was expressed in 1870 as follows: "Our farmers and

observed also in eastern Washington. In Klickitat County Shorthorn bulls had had a noticeably good effect upon the cattle, and this improvement had in some degree counteracted the evil effect of deteriorating ranges.[50] Shorthorn bulls and cows had likewise improved the quality of range cattle in the Yakima country, but there, as elsewhere in the Pacific Northwest, weights were said to be declining, and at least one Yakima cattleman expressed the opinion that the improvement of range cattle was not profitable.[51]

During the 1880s, it appears that there was extensive grading up of cattle herds in the Oregon Country. Doubtless the shrinking of the grazing area, the shift in some districts to the breeding of cattle in connection with farming operations, and an increasing tendency in the places of large operations to resort to enclosures may have altered considerably the outlook of cattlemen. Whatever the reason may have been, we read in the newspapers of that decade numerous reports of importations of blooded cattle into eastern and southeastern Oregon, eastern Washington, and various parts of Idaho.[52] Several kinds of blooded cattle were brought in, but the shorthorn Durham, the early favorite in the Oregon Country, was still far in the lead as late as 1886, according to an article in an early report of the United States Bureau of Animal Industry. This same article states that between 1877 and 1886 there were reported in Oregon 501 head of thoroughbred cattle, in Washington 172 head, and in Idaho 126 head.[53] If these figures and the returns of the next census are correct, the increase in the number of blooded cattle in the Pacific Northwest during the latter half of the 1880s was remarkable indeed, for in 1890 there were reported for Oregon 3,687 head of recorded purebred cattle, for Washington 2,129 head, and for Idaho 1,285 head. Of one-half or higher grade, Oregon in 1890 possessed 39,965 head, Washington 20,809 head, and Idaho 10,226 head.[54]

It may well be, therefore, that the editor of the *Morning Oregonian*, writing at the beginning of 1889, was not far wrong in his summary account of this matter.

> Inquiry as to the condition of the stock on the ranges east of the Cascades, shows that constant improvement has been made in excellence and breeds. Many importations of shorthorns, Polled Angus and Herefords have been made, and range cattle are being graded up and improved in quality. Only within a few weeks there have been brought to locations in Wasco several carloads of fine stock of the best breeds. While the shorthorn has a settled place and hold on the cattlemen of that region, there is beginning to be a liking for the hornless breeds. . . . There is hardly a trace left of the old Spanish cattle that had possession in the earliest days. The cattle that were brought across from the frontier by the pioneers of the forties were fair ordinary stock, American cattle of what we now call the common stock. . . . Gradually the range cattle have improved by the infusion of full blood through the introduction of thoroughbred males, until the herds that now roam the limitless ranges of Eastern Oregon and Washington are high grades in many instances and good beef stock in all. . . .[55]

Other reports lead one to the conclusion that the cattle of Idaho in the late 1880s were at least equal in quality to the cattle of Oregon and Washington.[56]

stockmen can raise good Oregon cattle (and to spare) for home consumption without the necessity of importing the *cultus* stock from Texas." *Weekly Mountaineer*, Jan. 4, 1870. See also the *Walla Walla Union*, Aug. 2, 1873.

[50] Gordon, "Report," 1090.

[51] *Ibid.*, 1091.

[52] *Spokane Falls Chronicle* (Wash.), Aug. 17, 1881; *Waitsburg Times* (Wash.), July 22, 1882; *Yakima Signal*, Feb. 24, 1883; *Pomeroy Republican* (Wash.), June 16, 1883; *Walla Walla Union*, May 8, 1886; *Silver State*, Apr. 14, 1880, Oct. 21, 1882; *Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman*, Oct. 17, 1882; *Idaho Weekly Statesman*, Apr. 17, 1886, Aug. 13, 1887; *Breeder's Gazette* (Chicago), 5:313 (Feb. 28, 1884); *North-West Tribune* (Cheney, Wash.), May 20, June 3, July 22, 1886; *Spokane Falls Review* (Wash.), Sept. 30, 1886; *Weekly Drovers Journal*, May 18, 1882; *Teller* (Lewiston, Idaho), May 7, 1885, July 22, 1886, June 2, 1887, May 31, 1888; U. S. Department of the Interior, *Report of the Secretary*, 1888, cxxiv; "Report of the Governor of Washington Territory" (Oct. 15, 1887), 50 Congress, 1 Session, 1887–88, *House Executive Documents*, 10:941–942 (Serial 2541). As early as 1883, the Idaho Fine Stock Breeders' Association was importing blooded cattle from the Eastern States. *Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman*, Nov. 24, 1883.

[53] E. W. Perry, "Number and Value of Pure-Bred Cattle in the United States," U. S. Bureau of Animal Industry, *Annual Reports*, 1887–1888, 339–358.

[54] U. S. Census Office, 11th Census, 1890, *Report on the Statistics of Agriculture*, 282, 303, 312–313.

[55] *Morning Oregonian*, Jan. 1, 1889.

[56] James L. Onderdonk, *Idaho: Facts and Statistics. . .* (San Francisco, 1885), 66, 84.

In the management of herds in the Oregon Country—whether the herds were large or small, whether they were held in the Columbia Basin or in the Winnemucca province—the ways of cattlemen were not strikingly dissimilar. Unfortunately we have little enough information on this important subject prior to 1880, for the reason that newspaper editors found then, as now, little news value in things altogether familiar. Only travelers unacquainted with the practices of a cattle country or agents sent to gather specific information on the operations of cattlemen could be expected to record facts that people of a later time, who are somewhat at a loss to understand a cattle economy, would like to know. Accordingly, despite extensive research, the writer of this essay has encountered for the period before 1880 only two accounts—both skimpy—of cattle ranches in the Oregon Country, one situated in eastern Washington and the other in southeastern Oregon.

In 1875 the editor of the *Willamette Farmer* obtained from a "fellow-townsman, Mr. M. Fisk," the following information about a ranch owned by Fisk and Walker in Washington Territory "about fifty miles above the Dalles":

> '. . Chapman's Creek puts into the Columbia there, and about three miles up the creek is a small valley containing about 300 acres of rich arable soil. Here the ranch is located, and here they have a fine farm for grasses, vegetables and cereals, with a good orchard, but that is the only arable land within a circuit of fifteen miles around, and as a consequence there is no other settlement to interfere with them in all that distance. The cattle of Fisk and Walker ought to number at least a thousand head, but there is no easy means of counting them. They are inhabitants of a range 200 miles in extent, at least some of them stray over that extent of territory. . . .[57]

Some four years later a correspondent of the Colusa, California, *Sun* visited the ranches of Glenn and French in the Steens Mountain country and wrote of them as follows:

> It [*i.e.*, the P Ranch] is a stock ranch, and covers an area of seventy-five miles long by twenty miles wide. If it were not, Dr. Glenn, you know, would have nothing to do with it. The Doctor has never seen it, however, and probably never will. He has a partner, Peter French, who stays at the ranch and runs the business. Mr. French was not at home, being absent in Portland on some Government business, but we were taken in charge by his major domo, or overseer, and kindly and hospitably entertained. There are two ranches on the range, the P ranch here in this valley,[58] and the Diamond ranch—so-called from the brands used—some twenty-five miles further on, in the valley of Keiger Creek.[59] These streams and valleys are so similar that a description of one is a description of both. The streams rise on the west side of Stein mountain[60] and flow in a northwesterly course, and sinking or spreading into broad marshes go to contribute to the waters of lakes Malheur and Harney.
>
> The valleys are thirty or forty miles long and from six to twelve miles in width. The soil is wonderfully fertile; the climate is not excessive, and fine grain and vegetables are produced in abundance every year, and of the best quality. The gently sloping hills are covered with bunch grass, and the wild grass of the valley will produce a ton and a half of hay to the acre. Here are rich and beautiful homes for 500 families, with ample stock range for all. Glenn and French hold this vast body of land by the right of undisturbed possession. We were told by his bookkeeper that no part of the immense track [*sic*] of land over which 25,000 head of cattle roam has ever passed any kind of title. It is true it would be a little unsafe for a settler to go into this country and attempt to make a homestead, for all such are treated as interlopers, and quickly invited to emigrate. . . .[61]

The Gordon Report, prepared for the Census of 1880, gives us our first generalized view of the practices of cattlemen throughout the entire Oregon Country. From that report we learn of similarities in respect to the acquisition of land, the common use of ranges, the capital outlays for ranch equipment, the shifting of cattle between summer and winter ranges, and the widespread practice of letting cattle fend for themselves in winter seasons. Generally, cattlemen, and especially those whose operations were on a small scale, held by homestead right, or by preemption (and sometimes by the right of first occupation only)

[57] *Willamette Farmer*, May 14, 1875.

[58] The P Ranch was in the valley of the Donner und Blitzen River, south of Burns and west of Steens Mountain, in the present Harney County. McArthur, *Oregon Geographic Names*, 405.

[59] A misspelling of Kiger Creek, so named by the wife of Ruben C. Kiger, who lived in this country between 1874 and 1878. McArthur, *Oregon Geographic Names*, 290.

[60] A common misspelling of Steens Mountain in the present Harney County. This mountain bears the name of Major Enoch Steen, U. S. Army. McArthur, *Oregon Geographic Names*, 490.

[61] *Silver State*, Dec. 12, 1879, presumably copied from the Colusa, Calif., *Sun*.

a small tract of land adjacent to a watering place. If water were scarce, a cattleman might, by fencing his holding, acquire a monopoly of a large range, but on ranges where water was plentiful and where herds were rather small, it was not unusual for the cattle of several owners to mingle freely together. Investments in ranch equipment, in comparison with the outlays for cattle, were small. Labor costs were low, and when, as was sometimes the case, cattle merely drifted between summer and winter ranges, the demands on the pocketbook of the cattleman for wages for herdsmen were not heavy.[62]

Usually an investment of a few thousand dollars provided ample equipment for carrying on even a large cattle-breeding enterprise. A home ranch equipped with a house or cabin for herders, stables for horses in active winter service, and a few corrals for branding stock was considered sufficient. If the range were large, corrals were built at several places convenient for branding stock. As a rule, a small area of meadow land was enclosed to provide hay for saddle horses, and there might also be enclosed pastures for horses kept for breeding purposes. Some owners, having learned the value of storing up hay for emergency winter feeding, enclosed rather extensive hay-producing areas.[63] Such men, however, were exceptional, and over against them may be set a few other men who seemingly could conduct a cattle-breeding business with virtually no investment at all in ranching equipment.[64]

In the Gordon Report there are brief descriptions of the equipment that two cattlemen of Washington Territory considered necessary for carrying on their operations. One of these, a Klickitat cattleman, had an investment of $5,600 in ranch equipment consisting of 160 acres of land valued at $1,600, buildings and fences worth $2,000, wagons, harness, saddles, and the like worth $500, and horses worth $1,500. With this equipment he managed a herd of 5,000 cattle.[65] The other, a Yakima cattleman, had found that an outlay of $11,800 would be needed to provide ranch equipment to take care of 5,000 cattle on his range. This sum of money would provide buildings, fences, and corrals, horses for handling cattle and for breeding purposes, and 300 acres of land worth $5,000.[66]

Not much more assuming, if any at all, were the buildings and other equipment on some of the large ranches in southeastern Oregon. Concerning Baker and Grant counties the Gordon Report says:

> In some instances in Oregon the plant embraces more pretentious buildings, a hay claim, and fenced pastures of very considerable extent, but commonly the improvements are limited to merely a comfortable log cabin and a rough stable for half a dozen horses, with stock-pens adjacent in which to corral and brand cattle. If the herd handled is a large one, and the cattle occupy a wide extent of country, several other corrals are generally put up at points convenient to the usual rodeo grounds. At such inclosures the necessary marking and branding of calves can be effected without the trouble and injury to the cows and calves of driving them a long distance to the corrals at the home ranch, or of doing this work on the open prairie; the latter practice is always injurious to cattle, as it is apt to overheat the calves and

[62] For many years Yakima Valley cattlemen drove their herds to summer ranges in the Kittitas Valley and returned them to winter ranges on the lower Yakima River in the autumn. *Walla Walla Union*, May 3, 1873, Oct. 17, 1874; *Willamette Farmer*, Apr. 26, 1884; *Oregon and Washington Farmer*, May 1883, p. 14. Of similar practices in Idaho, the surveyor general of that Territory, William P. Chandler, wrote in 1879 as follows: "The herds are usually driven to the hills and mountain slopes during summer, reserving the feed along the foot-hills and valleys, where but little snow falls and the temperature is moderate, for winter. Most stock growers find their winter range near natural meadow lands, where hay enough is secured to feed through the exceptional seasons when deep snows cover the ground. These winters are liable to occur once in from four to six years." 46 Congress, 2 Session, 1879–80, *House Executive Documents*, 10:438 (Serial 1911). Cattlemen of Oregon were given to similar practices. "A noticeable feature of cattle-raising in Oregon, as in the adjacent states and territories, is the change of pasture made during the year between winter and summer range. In some localities this movement is instinctive on the part of the cattle; in others the stock is gathered and driven to the hills in April or May to range during summer, and is returned in November to the lower winter ranges. The Blue mountains, Stein's mountain, and the spurs of the Cascades extending east into Lake county are the regions which furnish in the well-watered valleys and slopes the summer pasture for eastern Oregon stock." Gordon, "Report," 1081.

[63] Gordon, "Report," 1091; John C. Young of Oneida County, Idaho, in "Report of the Public Lands Commission," 46 Congress, 2 Session, *House Executive Document 46*, 337.

[64] Letter from M. McManamon, Feb. 27, 1878, in the *Palouse Gazette*, Mar. 9, 1878.

[65] Gordon, "Report," 1090.

[66] *Ibid.*, 1090.

make the whole herd wild, besides wearing out the saddle-horses unnecessarily. In addition to his buildings and corrals and limited fencing, the large cattle-raiser is possessed of a camp wagon, work animals, harness, and saddles, and a band of well-broken cow-horses sufficient to allow to each of his herders several spare animals. With this moderate outlay in equipments the Oregon cattle-raiser is prepared to conduct a business which involves a capital in cattle of many thousands of dollars.[67]

As the years of the 1880s slipped by, large-scale cattlemen in southeastern Oregon and southern Idaho greatly increased their landholdings and more generally took to fencing large tracts. For example, a newspaper story, published as early as 1882, asserts that W. B. Todhunter had over 100,000 acres of land.

He got patents last month for 35,000 acres of swamp land in one bunch. He has about 1,000 bulls and 300 saddle horses. He employes 50 men and puts up 2,500 tons of hay, to guard against hard winters. He keeps one hundred work horses and raises grain enough to feed all his saddle and work stock. Besides his cattle, he has 700 or 800 stock horses, 4 jacks and 50 stalions [*sic*]. He has four ranches, one known as the White Horse ranch, lying just inside the Oregon line. . . . The home ranch is twenty-five miles from a neighbor.[68]

When Todhunter disposed of his holdings in 1887, he had, besides his cattle, 200,000 acres of land and 2,000 horses.[69] In the meantime, other cattlemen in that area and in Idaho had increased their holdings. Evidence appears, also, that on the best-conducted ranches fencing was becoming more general during this decade. The Gordon Report asserts that on the Glenn-French ranches more than 30,000 acres were enclosed and that elsewhere in Grant County other large areas had been fenced.[70] Other sources tell of similar developments in southern Idaho, and we read also that Todhunter and several other large-scale cattlemen were in trouble in the spring of 1887 because they had run fences on government-owned land.[71]

Farther south in the Winnemucca province a Nevada ranch was advertised for sale in 1885 which was perhaps, in respect to its equipment, not unlike some cattle ranches in Oregon or Idaho at that time. Its description, therefore, merits careful study.

2,500 Acres of Patented Land in one body, extending along the Little Humboldt river for twelve miles, and controlling hundreds of thousands of acres of the finest Stock Range west of the Rocky Mountains. It is located 42 miles from Winnemucca.

There are six miles of fence, made of cedar posts and galvanized steel barbed wire; also, a fine Dwelling House, Stables, Sheds, and other Outhouses, and Corrals. The aggregate length of the Mangers in the Feeding Corrals is about three-quarters of a mile. The best and a full supply of all necessary Farming Machinery, Wagons, Blacksmith and Carpenter Tools.

Six hundred tons of fine red-top and clover Hay on hand. The Ranch will produce 5,000 tons of hay annually.

Household and Kitchen Furniture Complete.

On the land are some forty Springs, ranging in temperature from boiling hot to ice cold, giving an inexhaustible supply of water.

A few head of Horses and Hogs and a lot of Chickens go with the Ranch.

The climate is superb, and the water never freezes.

The Ranch and the Range will accommodate 5,000 head of cattle or 50,000 sheep. . . .[72]

Like the equipment used, the labor that a cattleman needed to operate a ranch in the Oregon Country could be obtained at a moderate cost. At the beginning of the 1880s, cowboys in southeastern Oregon were paid from $35 to $40 a month, besides board, which at that time, in the Yakima Valley of Washington Territory, was said to be worth $20 a month. On the large ranches of southeastern Oregon, foremen (majordomos), men upon whom fell heavy responsibilities, received wages varying from $60 to as much as $125 a month. Ordinary ranch hands in that area were paid $30 a month and board. The Klickitat cattleman whose business is described in the

[67] *Ibid.*, 1081.

[68] *Silver State*, Mar. 31, 1882, quoting the *Reno Gazette*.

[69] *Ibid.*, May 14, 24, 1887.

[70] Gordon, "Report," 1080. A detailed study of fencing in the Pacific Northwest, especially in the lightly timbered country east of the Cascades, would be particularly welcome. The introduction of barbed wire undoubtedly had an important effect upon the practices of cattlemen in this area. There can be little doubt that the heavy expense of fencing, owing to the scarcity of timber, sharpened the controversy between herdsmen and farmers in eastern Washington at the beginning of the 1880s.

[71] *Idaho Weekly Statesman*, Aug. 14, 1880; *Silver State*, Mar. 24, 1887.

[72] *Silver State*, Feb. 18, 1885.

Gordon Report kept six men regularly employed and paid five of them at the rate of $30 a month and board. One man, evidently a foreman or principal herder, received $40 a month and board. These men, by constant riding, did all the work that was required. The Yakima cattleman whose business also was described in the Gordon Report employed five men regularly. Four of them received $40 a month and board, and one of them received $60 a month and board. Additional men, when needed, received $1.50 a day and board. This cattleman needed ten extra men for one month to help round up his cattle for market, and in winter when the cattle had to be fed he also needed ten extra men for a month. From the standpoint of labor costs, some cattlemen believed that a herd containing fewer than 1,000 head was unprofitable. In southeastern Oregon three competent cowboys, it was said, would care for a herd of that size during the season of active work (April to December), except during roundups; and in that area the per capita cost of herding decreased as the size of the herd increased, twelve cowboys, for example, being expected to care for a herd of 8,000, except during a general roundup.[73]

Cowboys of the Oregon Country have not shared the glamor with which their brethren of Texas and the Great Plains have been invested. No cowboy literature has risen from the ranges of the Columbia Basin; no collections have been made of songs that may have lightened the labors of the men who punched cattle on the trails that led to The Dalles, or through the passes in the Cascades, or on the trails that led into the great trail that ran eastward into Wyoming. Cattle herders in the Columbia Basin, judged by evidence now available, were hard-working prosaic men. In that area Indians were sometimes called into service as drovers, and frontiersmen could hardly be expected to get lyrical about "lousy" Siwashes.[74] Jack Splawn, himself a cowboy who rode through many years the ranges and trails of the Columbia Basin, eulogized in his later years the cowboys he had known in earlier years; but John Minto, an Oregon pioneer, saw them in a somewhat less favorable light.[75] By 1880 cowboys from California had come upon the ranges of southeastern Oregon. These men were described as proficient herders, expert horsemen, and skillful ropers. Said to be superior even to the cowboys of Texas, a few of them could, under the direction of a competent majordomo, handle large herds of cattle with good results and with little "wear and tear on their saddle animals." Better trained and better mounted, they easily eclipsed, in both efficiency and picturesqueness, the American and the Siwash cowmen of northeastern Oregon and eastern Washington.[76] Not until the great eastward drives of the late 1870s and early 1880s got under way did the people of the Columbia Basin get glimpses of cowboys from the ranges beyond the Rockies. These men were objects of interest in the Columbia Valley in 1879, but they were looked upon as corrupters of the trade of cattle herder by 1881. " . . . now the American cowboy," wailed an Idaho editor, "seems to be a bigger thief and ruffian than his Mexican prototype."[77] But that was an overstatement.

For men who rode the ranges, whether cowboys or cattle owners, the most exacting and exciting labor was that connected with the roundup or rodeo.[78] The outgrowth of the efforts of men to establish their ownership to the rightful increase of their cattle on the open ranges, the roundup was an institution which flourished wherever the range-cattle business was carried on in the Far West. Ownership of range cattle was determined by brand and mark, the brand being burned into the hide of the animal with a red-hot iron. Brands were of various designs. Some consisted of the initials of the owner, others were of simple numerical design, but occasionally one appeared that was

[73] Gordon, "Report," 1083, 1090–1091.

[74] *Yakima Record*, June 26, 1880, June 17, 1882.

[75] Splawn, *Ka-mi-akin*, ch. 36; John Minto, "Sheep Husbandry in Oregon," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 3:237–238 (1902).

[76] Gordon, "Report," 1083.

[77] *Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman*, Nov. 3, 1881. A letter from The Dalles, dated Mar. 20, 1882, embodies the complaint that in the country tributary to The Dalles "a small but vicious" group of cowboys were becoming as "desperate and lawless as their brethren in Arizona and New Mexico." *Morning Oregonian*, Mar. 21, 1882.

[78] Oddly enough, instead of "rodeo," the word "rodero" often appeared in the newspapers of the Pacific Northwest. *Walla Walla Union*, May 9, 1874; *Idaho Avalanche*, Apr. 16, 1881; *Yakima Signal*, Oct. 13, 1883; *Kittitas Standard*, Sept. 22, 1883; *Yakima Record*, Apr. 15, 1882; *North-West Tribune*, July 17, 1885. In all the notices of such gatherings that I examined in the Winnemucca *Silver State*, the word "rodeo" was properly used. In the course of time it was generally supplanted by the word "roundup."

grotesque.[79] At the time of branding, an ear of the calf was also marked—that is, it was notched or cut to a point with a sharp knife.[80] Thus seared and mutilated, the young animal was turned loose to find a living on the range until such time as it fell victim to some hazard or until the owner was ready to dispose of it. For the purpose of branding and marking, it seemed desirable to bring the range cattle together periodically. Out of this need, therefore, the roundup came into being.

Roundups could be conducted by the informal voluntary cooperation of the cattlemen of a particular district, by independent action if owners of herds so desired, according to regulations prescribed by statute, or according to the rules formally adopted by an association of cattle breeders. In the Pacific Northwest, practices varied, but there voluntary cooperation, often by consent informally given, was widely practiced. A few cattlemen, especially the owners of large herds, were equipped to round up their own cattle. Of regulation of roundups by statutes, there appears to have been little in the Oregon Country. As early as 1877, the Idaho legislature prescribed a mode of procedure for roundups in certain counties, but in respect of this matter Idaho seems to have been unique. No such laws appear to have been enacted either in Washington or Oregon. As to regulation by associations, there was some of that to be sure, but in the Oregon Country no association of cattlemen ever became so powerful that it could regulate roundups generally.

Ordinarily two roundups a year were held in the Oregon Country, the first one beginning in April or May and lasting, sometimes, for several weeks. The second was held in the late summer or early autumn, at which time calves that had been missed in the spring were branded and marked, and beef cattle that were ready for market were separated from the herds.[81] When the practice began, about the middle 1870s, of selling cattle to stockmen east of the Rockies and to buyers from the Middle West, the spring roundups in the Oregon Country acquired peculiar importance, for it was at these roundups that cattle contracted for the preceding winter were delivered. Spring delivery was necessary because of the time required to drive cattle from eastern Washington or eastern Oregon to ranges in Wyoming or other far-distant States or Territories or to get them to Cheyenne or some other point on the Union Pacific Railroad from which they could be sent by rail to feeding grounds or markets in the Mississippi Valley. Accordingly, at the spring roundups the cattle that had been sold to Eastern buyers were cut out of the herds, branded with the road brand of the buyer and the counter-brand of the seller, and started toward their eastern destination, grazing en route.[82]

In the Columbia Basin the practice of holding roundups by informal voluntary cooperation was all but universal.[83] At the beginning of the 1880s, however, a Klickitat cattleman reported that the roughness of the country in which his cattle grazed precluded a general rounding up.[84] In the lower Yakima Valley, the practice followed in rounding up cattle at this time is thus described:

> The work of branding begins about the 1st of May, when an outfit of a dozen men starts out with a wagon and cook, and camp[s] near some corral on the range.

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[79] *Teller*, Aug. 3, 1882; *Spokane Falls Review*, Dec. 16, 1886. As an indication of the large number of brands used in the Pacific Northwest, the following statement concerning Whitman County, Wash., is of interest: "Seven hundred and fourteen brands are recorded in the brand books of Whitman county, or about one for every fifteen of population. Ordinary branding irons range in price from $2 to $5, and some of the 714 recorded are very intricate, making their cost greater. Not less than $3,000 was expended for these brands." *Walla Walla Union*, Sept. 19, 1885.

[80] Oregon and Washington laws prohibited the cutting off of more than one-half of an animal's ear; a Idaho law forbade the removal of more than one-third of an ear and also the trimming of an ear to a point. *Laws of Oregon*, 1885, 44; *Laws of Washington*, 1871, 103; *Laws of Idaho*, 1880–81, 297.

[81] *Yakima Record*, Apr. 15, 1882, May 12, 1883; *North-West Tribune*, Mar. 2, 1888, quoting the Ritzville, Wash., *Times*; "L. U.," writing from Jordan Valley, Oregon, May 1, 1881, in the *Idaho Avalanche*, May 7, 1881; *Oregon and Washington Farmer*, October 1882, p. 14, quoting the Lake County *Examiner; Kittitas Standard*, Sept. 22, 1883; *Yakima Signal*, Oct. 13, 1883.

[82] Gordon, "Report," 1082; *Idaho Avalanche*, June 4, 1881.

[83] The general practice is illustrated by a notice which reads: "We are requested by Mr. P. J. Flint to announce that the annual spring 'round up' of cattle on the Lower Yakima will begin at Selah Springs on Wednesday, the 23d of May, 1883. All who wish to take part are requested to meet at Selah Springs on Tuesday, the 22d." *Yakima Record*, May 12, 1883. On this subject, see also Splawn, *Ka-mi-akin*, 293.

[84] Gordon, "Report," 1090.

The surrounding country is ridden over, and all stock handled and calves branded within reach, the branding pen being used to corral cows and calves in. After working all the range within reach, the outfit and wagon go to another corral, 10 or 20 miles distant, and proceed to handle all the stock in that neighborhood. Thus they go through the range where, at different points convenient to favorite pasture grounds of cattle and to good water, corrals have been located for branding.[85]

In 1883 the roundup in this area was late, for it did not begin until May 23. The cattle then ranging here perhaps did not exceed 15,000 head. It is not stated how long the roundup lasted, but in June of that year Benjamin E. Snipes still had eighteen men at work branding calves on this range, and it was reported that this work would continue through the summer.[86] Evidently Snipes, like stockmen in an earlier year in the Owyhee River country, was not fully satisfied with the roundup and was supplementing its work by individual effort.[87] The fall roundup in the Yakima Valley in 1883 was completed early in October; and, significantly enough, it was reported that only about twenty men participated, the number of cattle on this range having greatly decreased.[88]

In southeastern Oregon, at the beginning of the 1880s, a general meeting of the stockmen of a region of "common occupation" was held in the spring for the purpose of organizing a rodeo. Such a roundup was carried out under the supervision of one man, whose special knowledge of the stock and of the region entitled him to a place of leadership. The roundups in this region, as the Gordon Report states, were never equal in magnitude to those held along the North Platte River, but in general object and in methods of procedure the roundups in southeastern Oregon were identical with those held east of the Rockies.

. . . Camp wagons follow the stockmen through the country "worked", and each day a new camp is made, from which, on the following morning, all the cattle within a radius of eight or ten miles are surrounded and driven to some flat or prairie convenient for rounding them up. While some of the riders keep the stock bunched by riding around the skirts of the herd, others enter the "round-up" on trained horses and separate or "cut out" first the cows and calves. They afterward separate the "dry stock", consisting of all other cattle, provided the stockmen present desire, as is generally the case in the spring, to gather all the animals of their own brand which can be found in order to move them back to their own range, from which they may have drifted during the winter storms.

The "round-up", having been thoroughly reviewed or "worked" by all those present who are looking for cattle, is turned loose, and the remaining cattle, consisting of animals belonging to the range and estrays unclaimed by their owners at the time, are permitted again to seek their usual feeding grounds. The cows and calves are now driven to branding pens, usually adjacent to the rodeo ground, where, after the calves are properly marked and branded, they are again turned out on the range, or, if belonging to another locality, are held with the other estrays and guarded night and day until enough cattle are gathered to warrant a "drive" to the range where they belong. A "round-up" thus traverses a region of some 75 or 100 miles long by 25 or 35 wide, and by gathering every herd of cattle met with during the daily reconnaissance or "circling in" of the vaqueros engaged in the work, each cattle-owner has an opportunity of finding and restoring to their proper pasture-grounds the cattle of his brand, provided no unusual storms during the winter have drifted his stock beyond the limits covered by the "round-up" in question. The large owners whose cattle range over several counties send men to represent their interests in the various "round-ups" of the neighboring regions. These men accompany, gather, and drive back such estrays of their employer's brand as are recovered.[89]

Men like Glenn and French, or Todhunter and Devine, monopolizing as they did large ranges for their own stock, conducted their own roundups. Their interest in the roundups such as those just described would consist merely in recovering such of their cattle as had wandered away from the ranges to which they belonged.

In Idaho Territory practices with respect to the rounding up of cattle were, in general, not dissimilar to those in Oregon and Washington, but in that Territory, as we have noted above, some roundups were held subject to rules established by law. A statute, passed by the legislature of Idaho and approved on January 12, 1877, provided for the creation of stock districts, the appointment therein of stock boards, and the compulsory attendance at roundups of cattlemen affected by the provisions of this act. In each district thus established, an annual roundup was required to be held between April 1 and August 1. The law made

[85] *Ibid.*, 1091.

[86] *Yakima Record*, May 12, 1883; *Willamette Farmer*, June 15, 1883.

[87] *Idaho Avalanche*, Nov. 12, 1881.

[88] *Yakima Signal*, Oct. 13, 1883.

[89] Gordon, "Report," 1081–1082.

provision for branding unclaimed animals with the district brand, and for registering descriptions of such animals, which, if still unclaimed at the end of a specified time, were to be sold as estrays. From the provisions of this act the counties of Alturas, Bear Lake, Boise, Idaho, Nez Perce, Owyhee, and Shoshone were exempted.[90] Presently the provisions of this act were extended to Bear Lake County, and in 1883 a similar measure was enacted for Idaho County.[91] Because cattle breeding was an important business in virtually all the counties exempted from the provisions of the law of 1877, one is inclined to believe that this law was enacted to correct conditions in certain counties that were beyond the power of cattlemen to set right by voluntary cooperation. "Slick-earing" and rustling, for example, may have become intolerable evils in some portions of Idaho.

In the days when cattle were grazed on open ranges, "slick-earing" was a practice somewhat like the practice, during the days of the Volstead Act, of making bathtub gin. Neither activity was respectable or honest, and consequently both were productive of stories that everybody liked to tell, sometimes with rich embellishments. Slick-ears, or mavericks, or whatever other name may have been used to designate them, were calves that turned up without mothers. There were always some of these at every roundup, and what to do with them was, of course, a problem—but a problem that could be solved by agreement among the cattlemen participating in the roundup.[92] No roundup, however, was entirely efficient. As a Yakima cattleman observed:

> Many calves are necessarily missed, and when these leave their mothers, or are weaned naturally, they are called "slick-ears", "sleepers," or "mavericks", and belong to any cattleman who can get his brand on them. In the spring men go out "slick-earing" with lassos and branding-irons on their saddles and secure such calves. The animals are roped and the iron put on, having been heated over a fire of sage-brush or cow-chips. This sort of business has proved the most profitable branch of the enterprise to some cattle-raisers, as they brand more calves than their cows number.[93]

Thus a cattleman who was quick with a lariat and untroubled by a conscience might add considerably to his wealth by slick-earing. It was simply astonishing how productive some ranges were, and how easily one might get started in the cattle business, wrote a Kittitas Valley correspondent of the *Yakima Record* in the spring of 1880. "I heard of one man that bought an old cow in the fall," he affirmed, "and in the spring came out with said cow and 40 head of calves."[94] A practice inevitable under the conditions of open-range grazing, slick-earing tended to deaden the consciences of some cattlemen, and so, as one editor put it, we need not be "surprised if, now and then, a cowboy kinder sorter persuaded a calf to denounce and abandon its mamma before the natural weaning time."[95] At least this sort of thing did not appear to be extraordinary to a cowboy on the Wasco range, who, in 1882, wrote as follows:

> You may know or have heard of "mavericks," "mallet-heads," "bronchos," etc. Well, they are unbranded yearlings; that is, calves that are missed on the spring and fall rides, and so go unmarked, unbranded, but not unknown. There are sharp eyes, swift horses and ready ropes waiting for just such opportunities and soon the broncho is marked and branded. It is only by easy stages that from yearlings the ages dropped until now *anything* unbranded, young or old, is taken, weaned away from its mother, branded and turned out. This nefarious business has assumed somewhat large proportions, and stockmen are becoming alarmed. What would you call this business? Up here we mustn't breathe the harsh word that rises to your lips—"It is retaliation: They all do it."[96]

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[90] *Laws of Idaho*, 1876–77, 27–32.

[91] *Ibid.*, 1880–81, 330–335; *Local and Special Laws of Idaho in Force on June 1, 1887*, 135–139.

[92] At the spring roundup on the Yakima range in 1883, "it was mutually agreed that one-half of all the 'slick-ears' found should be branded for Snipes & Allen and the other half be divided among the other stockmen." *Kittitas Standard*, June 30, 1883, quoting the *Goldendale Gazette*.

[93] Gordon, "Report," 1091.

[94] *Walla Walla Union*, Apr. 17, 1880, quoting the *Yakima Record*, Mar. 27, 1880.

[95] *Kittitas Standard*, June 30, 1883, quoting the *Goldendale Gazette*. In the autumn and winter following the severe winter of 1880–81, there were complaints, at least half-serious in tone, that in the Yakima Valley the business of "slick-earing" was all but ruined. As one stockman wrote from Camp Selah on Sept. 26, 1881: "Our round up is progressing nicely, but I must say, Mr. Editor, that as far as slickears are concerned that we have not branded enough to pay for the wear and tear of our slickear implements, which the boys seem to be well provided with. . . ." *Yakima Record*, Oct. 1, 1881. See also *ibid.*, Dec. 24, 1881.

[96] "The Wasco Range," *Morning Oregonian*, Feb. 21, 1882.

On the ranges men could conveniently pass from the practice of slick-earing to that of rustling, just as in a later time men could easily pass from the practice of making liquor for themselves to that of making it to sell to others. In either case, the end practice was naughty, dangerous, and frequently profitable.

To honest cattlemen, rustlers were the meanest creatures fashioned by the hand of God—"low, brutish things called men," as one editor characterized them.[97] Wherever they went they were loathed by honest men; and they went far and operated in devious ways. From the beginning to the end of open-range grazing, they were present in the Pacific Northwest, laying hold of cattle that were not their own. They altered cattle brands and marks and laid claim to cattle that were imperfectly branded and marked. If they happened to be drovers, they might put a road brand on cattle they had not bought.[98] All such diverting pastimes as these were apart from open stealing, of which during the 1880s there were widely voiced complaints—complaints that organized bands of cattle thieves were operating in Idaho, eastern Oregon, the Yakima Valley, and the Big Bend country of eastern Washington.[99] By law the property of cattlemen appeared to be adequately protected, but law enforcement was difficult in a sparsely peopled and poorly policed country. There were indictments, trials, and convictions of cattle thieves, but of the men who felt called to the profession of cattle stealing there were no doubt many more who escaped detection than served sentences in State or Territorial prisons.[100] Cattlemen were not, however, wholly dependent upon the law for protection; they all knew of vigilante ways in mining camps, and, like men in such communities, they could, and did, band together to inflict upon evil doers summary punishment. Vigilante action did not invariably mean a trial informally held and swiftly concluded, to be followed by a hanging equally informal and quickly terminated. Sometimes men suspected of cattle stealing were warned to leave the country within a period of a few hours, and men so warned were not wise if they delayed their departure.[101] For cattlemen did take drastic action on such fellows. More than once in the Oregon Country the break of day disclosed the body of a suspected rustler hanging from the limb of a tree.[102] How many such actions took place, we shall probably never know. One is left to suspect more than one can prove. No doubt there was more cursing than acting, more threatening than hanging. But the knowledge that enraged stockmen would deal out justice of their own devising to rustlers undoubtedly served to restrain somewhat men who yearned to appropriate what was not their own.

Men who were given to slick-earing or to rustling were beyond doubt the worst human enemies of the cattlemen, but they were not the only ones. There were careless white men who set the bunch grass afire, and there were malicious settlers who shot down trespassing cattle.[103] In earlier years, it is true, American settlers in southwestern Washington had improved their marksmanship by shooting the cattle of the Puget's Sound Agricultural Company, but such action obviously could not be invoked as a general precedent.[104] For were not these cattle the property of a foreign monopoly—British at that? For an American settler to shoot

[97] *Washington Independent* (Pomeroy), June 5, 1884.

[98] *Walla Walla Statesman*, Apr. 14, 1865; *Owyhee Avalanche*, Oct. 5, Nov. 23, 1867; *Walla Walla Union*, Apr. 11, 1874; *Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman*, Feb. 23, Mar. 4, 1875; *Teller*, Aug. 11, 1877; *Yakima Record*, July 10, 1880; *Spokane Falls Chronicle*, June 20, 1882; *North-West Tribune*, Feb. 23, 1883; *Walla Walla Watchman* (Wash.), Feb. 15, July 11, 1884; *Cheney Enterprise* (Wash.), Mar. 27, 1890.

[99] *Yakima Record*, July 10, 1880; *Walla Walla Union*, Nov. 25, 1882, quoting the *Yakima Record; Walla Walla Watchman*, July 25, 1884; *Teller*, June 4, 1885; *Idaho Weekly Statesman*, Aug. 4, 1883, May 24, 1884, Dec. 3, 1887; *Weekly Oregonian*, Oct. 25, 1889; *North-West Tribune*, Jan. 24, 1890.

[100] *Walla Walla Union*, June 7, 1873, Apr. 13, 1889; *Clarke County Register* (Vancouver, Wash.), Nov. 16, 1882; *Yakima Record*, Oct. 21, 1882; *Spokane Falls Chronicle*, June 27, 1882; *Teller*, July 1, 1886, July 18, 1889.

[101] *Weekly Oregonian*, Apr. 9, 1864; *Walla Walla Union*, Nov. 7, 1885.

[102] *Seattle Gazette* (Wash.), Apr. 27, 1865; *Bellingham Bay Mail* (Whatcom, Wash.), June 1, 1878; *Willamette Farmer*, May 17, 1878; *Walla Walla Union*, June 13, 1885.

[103] *Teller*, Sept. 13, 1878; *North-West Tribune*, Sept. 15, 1882; *Idaho Weekly Statesman*, July 12, 1884; *Weekly Oregonian*, Nov. 29, 1889; *Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman*, Oct. 22, 1864; *Walla Walla Union*, Sept. 4, 1875.

[104] See the complaint of Dr. W. F. Tolmie to Isaac I. Stevens, governor of Washington Territory, Dec. 27, 1853, in 33 Congress, 2 Session, 1854–55, *Senate Executive Document 37*, 14–15.

the trespassing cattle of an American stockman—that was an offense not to be tolerated in a "humane community." Then there was "Lo, the poor Indian." When he was on his reservation, the "noble red man," aided by the "Christian Indian Ring" in the East and abetted by dull-witted bureaucrats in Washington, monopolized good grazing land that belonged to him but which should have been open to the cattle of white men. When he was off the reservation, "Lo" set the grass afire, stampeded cattle when he was hunting deer, and sometimes, when the hunting was poor, or when he was in a playful mood, he shot cattle that belonged to white men. For these reasons suffering cattlemen in the Oregon Country, intent upon preserving the principle of freedom of enterprise, were sorely tempted to make bad Indians good Indians.[105]

And as if it were not enough that human enemies should fill the cattleman's cup of woe to overflowing, nature herself seemed at times to rise up against him. From the earliest days of settlement in the Oregon Country, when public meetings held in the Willamette Valley to adopt measures to protect herds from predatory animals helped set in motion the machinery of government,[106] down to as late as 1883, cattle herds in the Far Northwest were to some extent in danger of being attacked by wild animals. Losses of cattle from such causes in Idaho and in Klickitat County, Washington, were reported by the Census of 1880,[107] and three years later there came from widely separated communities in the Pacific Northwest complaints of losses from this cause. In that year cougars were destroying cattle in Whatcom County, Washington, and grizzly bears were taking a heavy toll of cattle in Lake County, Oregon.[108] In the latter area stockmen were offering a bounty of $30 for each grizzly scalp brought in.[109]

More menacing, however, than attacks of predatory animals upon cattle was the presence on the ranges of a poisonous plant. In the beginning stockmen were puzzled when they observed that early in the spring some of their cattle died of what appeared to be poisoning, for they did not know which plant to blame. Sometimes suspicion fastened on the poison oak, sometimes on the wild parsnip, but presently and more frequently on the wild larkspur.[110] Probably, as one scientist suggested, the offending plant was a variety of monkshood (*Aconitum Fischeri*).[111] Having learned that the danger occurred early in the spring, and then only, cattlemen came to be on their guard, and some of them, occasionally at least, sought safety for their cattle by driving them into the foothills as early as March.[112] Losses from this cause, though not formidable, were nevertheless annoying. At the beginning of the 1880s, such losses were running from less than 1 percent annually in Idaho to as much as 2 percent annually in one area of eastern Washington.[113]

Losses from the above-mentioned causes cattlemen could take in their stride, but it would have been otherwise had an epidemic disease swept the ranges. Fortunately, during the period of this

[105] This subject is too vast to be fully developed here. See, however, *Walla Walla Statesman*, Aug. 16, 1867; U. S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Report*, 1870, 532; *Willamette Farmer*, July 29, 1871, quoting Professor T. H. Crawford; *Yakima Record*, May 20, June 19, 1880; *North-West Tribune*, June 30, 1880; editorial, "'Lo'—The Malheur Reservation," *Idaho Weekly Statesman*, Mar. 18, 1882. Almost from the establishment of Indian reservations in the Pacific Northwest, white men coveted much of the land thus set aside. Government officials reported in favor of reducing reservations; legislatures memorialized Congress to this end; and editors bewailed the fact that the "noble red man" was obstructing the progress of civilization. Cattlemen, contrary to law, let their cattle trespass on the reservations. The worst instance was no doubt on the Malheur Reservation in eastern Oregon, especially after 1878. This unsavory affair is dealt with in the reports and letters of the agent for the Malheur Reservation, W. V. Rinehart, between 1878 and 1882. These papers, formerly in the Indian Office, are now available in the National Archives, Washington, D. C.

[106] Grover, La Fayette, *The Oregon Archives* (Salem, Oregon, 1853), 8–15.

[107] Gordon, "Report," 1090, 1099.

[108] *Yakima Signal*, Oct. 13, 1883, quoting the *Whatcom Reveille; Willamette Farmer*, Nov. 2, 1882, quoting the Lake County *Examiner*. As early as the spring of 1880, one cattleman in Lake County lost about 100 calves as a result of attacks by grizzlies. *Morning Oregonian*, May 21, 1880.

[109] *Willamette Farmer*, Nov. 2, 1883.

[110] *Oregon Farmer*, May–July 1859, May 15, 1861; *Daily Mountaineer*, Mar. 30, 1866; *Walla Walla Union*, Feb. 21, 1874; *Willamette Farmer* (supplement), May 1, 1874; *Idaho Weekly Statesman*, June 19, 1880, Apr. 3, 1886.

[111] Brewer, "Pasture and Forage Plants," 964.

[112] *Bellingham Bay Mail*, Apr. 24, 1875, Mar 11, 1876.

[113] Gordon, "Report," 1090, 1091, 1099. The loss of some cattle was attributed to alkali dust. *Ibid.*, 1099; *Washington Statesman*, Aug. 1, 1863.

study nothing of the sort happened, though some cattlemen lived in fear of pleuropneumonia and Texas fever. Now and again sporadic diseases that were baffling affected cattle in some areas,[114] but it was not until 1880 that the blackleg began to strike down young cattle.[115] Between that year and 1884, this disease was reported to be present in nearly all the cattle districts of the Pacific Northwest, the worst year probably being 1883.[116] "Fearful fatalities" were reported at times by newspaper editors—but then the language of frontier journalism was always pitched in a high key.[117] An average annual loss of 1½ percent from disease was reported by a Klickitat cattleman in 1880, and of 2 percent by a Yakima cattleman in the same year.[118] Before that year the Yakima cattleman had suffered no loss from disease.[119] A report to the United States Bureau of Animal Industry in 1884 stated that individual losses from blackleg in the Pacific Northwest were small but that in the aggregate the loss was considerable.[120] Blackleg was reported by the Baker City *Democrat* as late as the autumn of 1887.[121]

Nature in the fullness of her wrath struck the cattlemen of the Far Northwest only occasionally and then by a winter of great severity. Winter was an enemy that gave the cattleman no quarter; it was the only foeman that periodically brought him to his knees. As early as the 1860s, one Oregonian caught the spirit of Oregon stockmen in respect of the menace of winter and embodied it in "The Stockmen's Prayer":

> O Stockmen's God! O Thou
> To whom we always look
> And humbly, trusting bow
> In prayer and praise—CHINOOK!
> On thee we more rely
> Than all the hay and straw,
> Or barley, oats and rye
> For thy propitious thaw.
> . . . .
> O grant thy winds and rains
> Upon poor us to send,
> And we'll not pray again
> Until next fall—Amen.[122]

Such no doubt was the sort of prayer that many a cattleman uttered as he listened, day after day, to wintry winds sweeping over snow-crusted ranges and frozen streams and waterholes and thus intensifying the misery of his dying cattle. Then, if ever, he prayed to Chinook, the warm wind before whose breath ice and snow would melt away.

In one area or another of the Pacific Northwest severe weather during the period of this study frequently inflicted considerable damage upon the herds of some cattlemen, but within these thirty years only three winters—those of 1861–62, 1880–81, and 1889–90—were generally severe and in their effect utterly devastating. Nobody knows how many head of cattle perished in those and lesser winters, but in some instances the losses are known to have been prodigious. Against the indifference of cattlemen to the hazard of winter, editors raved and ranted—but to little effect. Taught by bitter experience, a few cattlemen mended their ways to some extent, but many of them preferred to keep on gambling with the weather. What one editor of the Pacific Northwest said before 1860 about the shameful neglect of cattle in winter and what others in substance repeated in years that followed, still another editor was saying as late as 1890. That it was dangerous as well as cruel to let cattle go through a winter without any feeding was a hard lesson for cattlemen to learn,

[114] *Oregon Sentinel*, Oct. 13, 1866; *Willamette Farmer*, Mar. 23, 1872.

[115] *Idaho Weekly Statesman*, Oct. 16, Dec. 25, 1880. "We are informed that the disease among cattle known as 'black leg' is unabating. Several sections of our county have suffered severely, and if the malady is not checked it will cause a great financial loss to many stock-raisers. On Upper Burnt River, N. McClenahan has lost recently about forty head and many other stock-raisers in that section have received a great loss." *Willamette Farmer*, Dec. 31, 1880.

[116] *Silver State*, Sept. 2, 1881; *Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman*, Sept. 15, 1881; *Morning Oregonian*, Oct. 19, 1881; *Idaho Avalanche*, Nov. 12, 1881; *Clarke County Register*, Jan. 12, Mar. 23, 30, 1882; *Weekly Ledger* (New Tacoma, Wash.), Nov. 10, 1882; *Yakima Signal*, Mar. 24, June 9, 1883; *Waitsburg Times*, June 8, 1883; *Kittitas Standard*, July 14, 1883; *Washington Independent*, Aug. 16, 1883; U. S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Report*, 1883, 186; U. S. Department of Agriculture, *Special Report 58* (April 1883), 21.

[117] *North-West Tribune*, Aug. 29, 1884.

[118] Gordon, "Report," 1090, 1091.

[119] *Ibid.*, 1091.

[120] J. H. Fullinwider in U. S. Bureau of Animal Industry, *Annual Report*, 1884, 277.

[121] *Morning Oregonian*, Oct. 3, 1887.

[122] *Weekly Mountaineer*, Jan. 6, 1872. This "prayer" was written and first published about the beginning of 1868.

and one that many cattlemen of the Pacific Northwest never learned well.[123]

Though they may not have learned well the lesson of preparing themselves to cope with severe winters, cattlemen everywhere in the Pacific Northwest discovered, sooner or later, the advantages of formal association. Even the most powerful of them, men who were so well equipped that they could conduct their own roundups, came into associations formed to protect cattlemen's interests. Local associations of cattlemen no doubt often evolved from informal associations, or cattle clubs, under whose direction district roundups were held; such associations were characteristic of the Columbia Basin where physiographic conditions were not favorable to large-scale organizations.[124] No evidence has been found of either an Oregon stock growers' association or a Washington Territory stock growers' association, and most certainly there is no record of an Oregon *and* Washington association of that sort. In the Columbia Basin cattlemen sought to protect their interests by applying the principle of voluntary association on a strictly local basis.

In the Winnemucca province, however, it was otherwise. Here there were local associations of cattlemen—several of them. By the spring of 1881 cattlemen in Baker County, Oregon, had organized for mutual advantage an association which adopted resolutions opposing the branding of stock not known to belong to the persons doing so and favoring the appointment of a judiciary committee whose duty it would be to adjust among the members all matters pertaining to the ownership of stock.[125] A year later the *Prineville News* advised that the local association of livestock men "tax each member, according to the amount of stock owned, to a sufficient amount to import a number of thoroughbreds, to be turned on the range for the general use of all."[126] Even earlier still, stock depredations in Lake County, Oregon, had so aroused the cattlemen there that they were reported to be banding together for the purpose of offering a reward of $500 for the arrest and conviction of anybody guilty of stealing stock or altering brands.[127] Farther eastward in Oregon, beyond the Blue Mountains, by the streams which empty their waters into the Snake River, and farther south in the country drained by the Owyhee River and its many tributaries, cattlemen of Oregon found themselves drawn into associations with cattlemen of Idaho or Nevada. In 1883, for example, there was formed in Silver City, Idaho, a stock growers' association of men from Baker County, Oregon, Owyhee County, Idaho, and Elko County, Nevada.[128] Local and regional associations existed elsewhere in southern Idaho, such for example as the one formed at Boise in 1875, which possibly was functioning as late as 1886 and 1887, under the name of the Central Idaho Stock Growers' Association.[129] As early as 1884 there was in existence the Utah and Idaho Consolidated Stock Association, whose president in that year signed the call for a meeting of cattlemen to form the Idaho Stock Growers' Association.[130]

In contrast to the Columbia Basin province, however, the Winnemucca province invited large-scale association. In 1884 organizations of that type began to appear in this province, when both the Nevada Live Stock Association and the Idaho Stock Growers' Association were formed. Of these associations, the former was first in point of time and doubtless also in point of size and influence. It was formed in Winnemucca as an interstate affair on February 11 and 12, 1884, and from the beginning it sought, without complete success, to absorb other cattlemen's associations in Oregon and Idaho.[131] Within a year of its formation, however, its secretary could report that it had 177 members, "including representatives from Idaho, Oregon, Utah, California and Nevada, representing 235,425 head of cattle, 20,379 head of horses, and 48,600 sheep, at an estimated value of $6,696,090."[132] Some of the most prominent cattlemen of southeastern Oregon, notably W. B.

[123] J. Orin Oliphant, "Winter Losses of Cattle in the Oregon Country," *Washington Historical Quarterly*, 23:3–17 (1932).

[124] *Idaho Signal* (Lewiston), Aug. 17, 1872; *Weekly Mountainer*, June 12, 1875; *Palouse Gazette*, Jan. 6, 1880; *Willamette Farmer*, Mar. 25, 1881; *Walla Walla Union*, May 8, 1886; *Teller*, Sept. 9, 1886.

[125] *Willamette Farmer*, Mar. 25, 1881.

[126] Quoted by the *Oregon and Washington Farmer*, September 1882, p. 2.

[127] *Morning Oregonian*, Jan. 11, 1881.

[128] Wallace W. Elliott & Co., *History of Idaho Territory*. . . (San Francisco, 1884), 299.

[129] *Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman*, May 4, 1875; *Idaho Weekly Statesman*, Jan. 23, 1886, June 11, 1887.

[130] *Ibid.*, Nov. 1, 1884.

[131] *Silver State*, Feb. 11–12, May 21, 1884.

[132] *Ibid.*, Mar. 4, 1885.

Todhunter, Peter French, and T. M. Overfelt, were members of its executive committee. Nevertheless, the Idaho Cattle Growers' Association was formed late in 1884 as an idependent organization and continued as such.[133]

The purpose of cattlemen's associations, whether local, state-wide, or interstate in character, was to protect the property interests of their members. The association formed at Silver City in 1883, for example, planned to keep a record of marks and brands, to mark and brand calves at roundups whether their owners were present or not, to appoint a cattle inspector to visit herds passing through the territory for the purpose of selecting therefrom cattle belonging to members of the association, and to prosecute thieves.[134] Equally pertinent was the purpose of the Nevada Live Stock Association, a purpose which, as stated by a Winnemucca editor in 1884, was "to protect the property of its members, and prosecute evil-doers." "The general impression is," this editor continued, "that a thief would run much less chance of being punished if caught stealing a hundred thousand dollars from Uncle Sam than if caught stealing a horse or branding a calf that belongs to a member of the Nevada Live Stock Association."[135] A few months later this same editor learned that the "Nevada, Idaho, and Montana Cattle Growers' Associations have appropriated $3,000 to pay detectives to scour the Snake River mountains for cattle thieves, and secure evidence that will lead to there [*sic*] conviction. The associations are determined to stop cattle and horse stealing, and see that no guilty man escapes."[136] Further research must be made, however, before anybody can tell accurately how well the cattlemen's associations in the Winnemucca province accomplished their purposes.

How profitable the cattle business here briefly described proved to be, we have little means of knowing. With the exception of those who operated on a large scale, cattlemen of the Oregon Country, indifferent to the needs of the historians of their business, made little pretense of keeping records. Living before the days of a Federal income tax, they could safely indulge in the luxury of guessing as to whether they were or were not making money. Like placer mining and trading in stocks, cattle breeding on the open ranges was a highly speculative business. Ranges could and did become crowded; herds of sheep could and did come upon ranges and ruin them for cattle grazing; farmers could and did appropriate the grasslands for their own purposes; markets could and did fail cattlemen. No doubt in the flush days of the placer-mining era some cattlemen of the Pacific Northwest made handsome profits; and no doubt others who, in later years, sold their herds to men who were expanding their operations did well. No doubt also many of these cattlemen suffered severe losses. During the dark days of the depression of the 1870s, few, if any, cattlement of the Oregon Country made money. In the boom years that followed this depression, some of them may have sold their cattle to good advantage on a rising market. As to the situation in general, we would do well, in the present state of our knowledge of this subject, to speak cautiously, being content for the moment with what our brief survey has shown us. Information may hereafter be found that will permit us to see this subject in a clearer light. Thus far our studies have shown us that, regardless of the profits of the ordinary cattleman, the range and ranch cattle business of the Oregon Country was more widespread and more important than it has generally been thought to have been—important not only to the area in which it was carried on but also to other and larger areas of the Great American West.[137]

[133] *Idaho Weekly Statesman*, Nov. 22, 29, 1884, Feb. 11, 1888; Onderdonk, *Idaho; Facts and Statistics. . . .*, 51.

[134] Wallace W. Elliott & Co., *History of Idaho Territory*, 299.

[135] *Silver State*, Feb. 13, 1884.

[136] *Ibid.*, Nov. 20, 1885.

[137] This article should be read in connection with an earlier paper by the present writer, "The Eastward Movement of Cattle from the Oregon Country," *Agricultural History*, 20:19–43 (January 1946).

SOUTH DAKOTA'S RURAL CREDIT SYSTEM

A Venture in State Socialism, 1917–1946

GILBERT C. FITE

Department of History, University of Oklahoma

In the second decade of the twentieth century the demand for state-owned and operated enterprises was one of the chief reflections of rural unrest in the North Central States. This solution to farm problems manifested itself most clearly in the Nonpartisan League's program in North Dakota. But it was not confined to that State. South Dakota's program of state-owned businesses was almost as extensive as that in the neighboring State, the most important being a rural credit system.

Recently South Dakota completed disposal of more than 1,700,000 acres of land acquired from this program through foreclosure during about twenty years. The State now holds only one tract, and the entire project will be liquidated by 1960 with a total loss to the taxpayers approximating $57,000,000. These circumstances warrant a complete review of this state-owned enterprise. It is of more than local significance because it represents a basic economic philosophy which is steadily gaining popularity in many quarters. The project's critics caustically remarked later that it was inaugurated by "The New Dealers of 1915"!

Cheap credit has been a persistent demand of American farmers, and lack of it in newly developed agricultural regions has led to various expedients. One of the most popular devices to solve the credit problem in the North Central States between 1910 and 1920 was to put the States in the money-lending business. Especially in Minnesota and North and South Dakota many farmers believed that credit abuses could be eliminated only in this manner, and State systems were adopted.

The father of South Dakota's rural credit plan was the Midwest's leading artesian-well driller, Peter Norbeck of Redfield. Through his business he came in close contact with the credit needs of South Dakota farmers and soon after his election to the State senate in 1908, he began advocating the extension of credit by the State at low interest rates. Norbeck later recalled that he had read of New Zealand's agricultural credit system, as well as European plans, where the governments furnished funds for agricultural development.[1] While he no doubt derived ideas from numerous sources, he was probably indebted to George W. Fischer of Redfield for the plan which he finally supported.[2]

By 1912 Norbeck had developed what he believed to be a workable and practical rural credit plan. He argued that the State could use its credit to borrow money at cheaper interest rates than could an individual farmer and in turn loan it directly to farmers at an interest rate only enough higher to cover handling charges. He suggested that the State take real estate mortgages for its loans, payable over many years, preferably thirty, and on an amortization plan.[3] This in effect was Fischer's idea which was published in detail in 1913.[4]

After 1912 Norbeck became more persistent in his advocacy of a liberal farm loan plan. Representatives of the cooperative grain elevator movement gave him helpful support.[5] Norbeck justified his proposal on the theory that South Dakota was a relatively new State and lacked sufficient capital to finance agricultural expansion and development. He observed that it was difficult, if not impossible, for the average farmer to obtain money outside the State and that he was compelled to borrow at a local bank. Interest rates were

[1] Peter Norbeck to V. E. Anderson, May 3, 1922. The Norbeck Manuscripts are deposited at the University of South Dakota Library. All letters hereafter cited are found there.

[2] Interview with Charles Woodland, June 23, 1944.

[3] Norbeck to Charles Woodland, Dec. 14, 1912. Woodland helped Norbeck write some of his first rural credit bills.

[4] A copy of this plan is in the Norbeck Manuscripts.

[5] Norbeck to G. H. Henry, May 20, 1925.

unduly high, amounting to 10 or 12 percent in the undeveloped regions of western South Dakota. In addition, the banker or local money lender often added commission charges and other fees.[6]

Norbeck was among those who had unlimited faith in the future of his State. Many South Dakotans envisioned a State as well cultivated and improved as Iowa.[7] The prairie could be made to bloom like a rose, they said, if only ample credit was available.

In 1914 Norbeck was elected lieutenant governor, and the following year, largely through his influence, the legislature passed a resolution submitting the question of adopting a rural credits plan to the voters in 1916. The resolution met little opposition and "went slam banging through the legislative halls like a house afire."[8] By that time Norbeck led the progressive Republicans in his State and received the nomination for governor. Between the time the legislature submitted the amendment and the election, the Federal Farm Loan Act of 1916 was passed. Many farmers believed that a State plan was no longer necessary. But during the campaign, Norbeck spoke in every county in the State on behalf of this measure. He also succeeded in pledging the party platform and the campaign speakers to the plan.[9]

Norbeck was elected governor by the largest popular vote ever received by a South Dakota gubernatorial candidate up to that time, and the rural credits amendment was approved by a vote of 57,569 to 41,959.[10] The progressive Republicans supported it as well as many Democrats.

Believing that the Federal Farm Loan Act was entirely inadequate and that it involved too much red tape, Norbeck proceeded to actuate his own idea. In his inaugural address in January 1917, he referred to rural credit as "one of the most important matters . . . at this session." He warned that the law must be carefully drawn and urged the establishment of a separate department responsible to the governor.[11] The legislature passed a bill embodying these recommendations, and it was signed on February 26, 1917.

The law provided for a rural credit board consisting of the governor and four appointees. The board was authorized to borrow money on the State's credit and lend it directly to farmers on real estate mortgages. Loans were to be repaid on the amortization plan in not less than five nor more than thirty years. Funds could be borrowed to purchase land, equipment, and livestock, to make improvements or liquidate indebtedness on land, but no loan could exceed 70 percent of the value of the land plus 40 percent of the insured value of the improvements. In no case could a loan be made in excess of the average assessed valuation for the three preceding years and no funds would be lent to anyone not engaged in cultivating and developing farm land. No loan could exceed $10,000.

A reserve fund was to be provided amounting to the difference between what the State paid for money and the rate of interest charged farmers. The original law set this at 0.75 percent. The fund was to defray department expenses and care for any possible losses. The board was given discretionary power in selecting depositories for rural credit funds, but no single bank could hold deposits of more than 40 percent of its paid-up capital. State banks were permitted to hold rural credit monies without furnishing a surety bond, since they were protected by the State bank guaranty fund. Finally, $200,000 was appropriated to put the law into operation.[12] Norbeck wrote most of the important provisions and consequently the law incorporated his ideas.[13]

The bill passed with very little opposition. Extension of governmental functions was popular and in the progressive tradition. Those opposing the measure were deemed conservatives or reactionaries and obstacles to "progress." Years later the Sioux Falls *Daily Argus Leader* declared that only a few "lone souls" believed the scheme would not work successfully and at a great saving to the farmers.[14] "It is one of the most desirable pieces of legislation ever enacted for the benefit

[6] Norbeck later expressed his ideas in detail in "For the Whole Family," *Country Gentleman*, 85(7):4 (Feb. 14, 1920).

[7] South Dakota Rural Credit Department, *Special Report* (mimeographed pamphlet, Pierre, 1945), 1.

[8] *Daily Argus Leader* (Sioux Falls), Aug. 16, 1944.

[9] Norbeck to V. E. Anderson, May 8, 1922.

[10] *South Dakota Legislative Manual*, 1921, p. 440.

[11] *Peter Norbeck to the South Dakota Legislature* (a pamphlet, Pierre, 1917), 7.

[12] *South Dakota Session Laws*, 1916–17, ch. 333.

[13] Norbeck to Dennis O'Leary, Nov. 1, 1921. Later some of Norbeck's friends said he was not satisfied with the law and signed it only after concluding the defects could be ironed out later. He may have opposed some minor provisions of the bill, but basically it was his own work.

[14] *Daily Argus Leader*, Aug. 16, 1944.

of the farmer," said the *Aberdeen American* enthusiastically.[15] The Pierre *Daily Capital Journal* believed that it was the "greatest piece of constructive legislation of recent years."[16]

The farm journals displayed equal enthusiasm. The *Dakota Farmer*, which circulated widely over the Dakotas and Montana, declared that the law "bids fair to be a solution of the local problem and might well be a model for its sister states."[17] The *South Dakota Farmer*, published at Sioux Falls, expressed the belief that "there is a demand for something of the kind we never for a moment doubted; . . . to make the most of the opportunity to be of assistance to the farmers of South Dakota is clearly an obligation of the legislature."[18] The *Daily Huronite* was about the only major newspaper to sound a note of caution.[19]

It has been persistently claimed and generally believed that the rural credits act was adopted to meet the attack of the Nonpartisan League of North Dakota which began invading South Dakota late in 1916. This is untrue. The South Dakota legislature passed the proposed constitutional amendment before the League was born, even in North Dakota, and the law was in operation by the time the League had any substantial strength in the State. It was an old idea with Norbeck, one for which he had built up a great deal of popular support, and it was not adopted to counteract so-called radicalism. It coincided with the League's economic philosophy but that is all.[20]

The act was a model of simplicity. When a loan application was received, an examiner investigated the property on which the mortgage would be taken. The character and reputation of the borrower were also reviewed. The board then acted upon the examiner's recommendation.[21] After the loan was approved, the rural credits commissioner usually sent the money, with the necessary papers, to the farmer's banker, who closed the transaction and returned the mortgage to the board. Often a loan was completed in a week, and the only cost to the farmer was furnishing an abstract of title. Such a loosely managed system, however, could easily result in high appraisals, excessive loans, and consequent loss of capital. An unfortunate practice soon developed of the loans not being personally inspected by a department official. Letters were simply written to two or three local men who were familiar with the applicant.[22] Since a man would be asked to evaluate his neighbor's farm, he had a tendency to recommend the maximum.

The system was scheduled to begin operating not later than July 1, 1917. After securing favorable opinions from members of the Supreme Court on the constitutionality of the law,[23] Governor Norbeck established the necessary administrative machinery. The first and most important task was the appointment of the board members. This was not easy, and Norbeck stated that the choice of a treasurer would be especially "bothersome."[24] He finally chose C. M. Henry, J. E. Ziebach, Alfred Zoske, and A. W. Ewert.

Henry was South Dakota's tax commissioner, and he had engaged in the banking and real estate business for fifteen years. Ziebach, the only Democrat appointed, had spent forty years in the livestock business and was president of the Jerauld County bank at Wessington Springs. Zoske was a banker who had engaged extensively in ranching west of the Missouri River, and it was believed that he would be an expert on land values in that area where a majority of the loans would probably be made. The most important post, that of treasurer, was given to Ewert, a progressive and long-time friend of Norbeck. He was president of the Pierre National Bank of Commerce and had served two terms as State treasurer. The board appeared to consist of conservative hard-headed capable businessmen. About the only criticism came from those who believed the board contained too many bankers.[25]

Operation of the law was delayed because of an application to the Supreme Court asking for a writ of prohibition, preventing operation of the law. In the case of *Leslie L. Schaaf* v. *The South Dakota Rural Credit Board*, the Supreme Court

[15] *Ibid.*, Jan. 11, 1918, quoting the *Aberdeen American*.

[16] *Daily Capital Journal* (Pierre), Feb. 23, 1917.

[17] *Dakota Farmer*, 37:362 (Mar. 1, 1917).

[18] *South Dakota Farmer*, 16(19):4 (Jan. 26, 1917).

[19] *Daily Huronite*, Jan. 5, 1917.

[20] Norbeck to G. H. Henry, May 20, 1925. Norbeck to a Mr. Mitchell, Oct. 18, 1923.

[21] Norbeck, "For the Whole Family," 4.

[22] Norbeck to W. C. Allen, Dec. 18, 1924.

[23] South Dakota Rural Credit Board, *Report*, 1923, p. 5. Beginning in 1922 the board published an annual report at Pierre.

[24] Norbeck to Isaac Lincoln, Mar. 10, 1917.

[25] Norbeck to W. H. King, Nov. 8, 1919.

strongly upheld the constitutionality of the act.[26]

On September 1, 1917, $500,000 of rural credit bonds were sold. These were secured by the full faith and credit of the State and bore 4.75 percent interest. A similar issue was sold three months later.[27] The first farm loan was made on October 20, 1917.[28]

The demand for loans soon proved exceedingly heavy. Norbeck told the legislature in 1919: "While the plan has been in operation only fourteen months, a phenomenal amount of business has been done. The volume . . . far exceeded our expectations." He reported that already 1,544 loans had been closed, amounting to $5,524,250. "The expectations of the most ardent advocates of the law are being realized," he stated. And he added, "I feel safe in saying that no single act of legislation in this state has been more beneficial in its general results in promoting state development."[29]

By July 1, 1919, the board had closed loans aggregating $13,431,750. No official report was published giving a complete account of the business, with the exception of monthly and semi-annual reports filed in the governor's office. Of course, any citizen could go to his county courthouse and learn what loans had been made in that county and for what amounts. The executive accountant, however, reported that everything was in a satisfactory condition. He recommended only that the surety bond of the treasurer should be increased.[30]

When the department's first official report was made public in 1922, many South Dakotans began to doubt the wisdom of their farm loan plan. On June 30 of that year it was revealed that the board had completed agricultural loans amounting to $35,942,183.02 and that the State was responsible for outstanding rural credit bonds totaling $41,500,000. The report carried an optimistic tone, even though this heavy obligation caused much uneasiness among many citizens. The board reported that it had been necessary to foreclose only four mortgages and added that, while some losses were to be expected in a loan business of such magnitude, "actually no losses of consequence are apparent."[31]

At the same time, however, the board, perhaps unknowingly, disclosed a grave difficulty. It reported that because of the "unprecedented" slump in farm prices during 1920 and 1921, it had felt obliged to "pursue a liberal policy towards borrowers." Many farmers were found unable to pay their interest charges when due, said the board, making it necessary to grant "forbearance in cases where worthy borrowers were unable to pay in full or in part."[32] It did not take a financial expert to realize the seriousness of a situation where the State had to meet interest obligations regularly on over $40,000,000 but where it could not collect its payments on schedule. Taxpayers began to wonder if they might not be called on to keep the State financially solvent.

By June 1924, the department had made 11,693 farm loans totaling over $45,000,000. At that time $47,500,000 of rural credit bonds had been issued. The interest on the bonded indebtedness alone was $2,258,062.50 a year. The average loan per acre amounted to $14.71, while the appraised value of the secured land was $35.19.[33] Considering the character of much of the land both the loans and the appraised value were clearly excessive.

It was becoming increasingly evident that the State was destined to become one of the largest landholders within its borders. About 350 loans had been foreclosed by 1924. Nevertheless the board continued to express confidence in the system and insisted that no permanent losses would result to the State. Norbeck, who went to the United States Senate in 1921, also continued to have great confidence in the venture. As late as 1923, he wrote to a member of the Nebraska house of representatives suggesting that great benefits would be derived by that State if it would enact a similar law.[34] The board still consisted of Norbeck's appointees, with his successor, Governor William McMaster, as president. The business judgment of the board may have been questionable, but its continued optimism and enthusiasm can not be doubted.

[26] *Leslie L. Schaaf* v. *The South Dakota Rural Credit Board*, in 29 *South Dakota Reports*, 377.

[27] South Dakota Department of Executive Accountant, *Biennial Report*, 1923–1924, p. 125.

[28] Rural Credit Board, *Report*, 1922, p. 5.

[29] *Peter Norbeck to the South Dakota Legislature*, 16.

[30] South Dakota Department of Executive Accountant, *Biennial Report*, 1920, p. 84.

[31] Rural Credit Board, *Report*, 1922, p. 7.

[32] *Ibid.*, 1922, p. 7

[33] *Ibid.*, 1924, p. 16.

[34] Norbeck to E. P. Wilson, Jan. 22, 1923.

Considerable criticism of the system developed before and during the legislative session of 1923. For instance, the Sioux Falls *Press* charged that the entire rural credit situation needed a public airing.[35] Reports of this kind helped stimulate a legislative investigation during that session. A special committee reported that the rural credit board had purposely offered excessive bond issues because of distressed financial conditions in the State. Rural credit bonds had been sold to raise money to deposit in State banks, giving relief to those institutions. In other words, rural credit deposits kept them from meeting financial disaster during the agricultural crisis of 1921 and 1922. In spite of the depression, however, loaning operations had not materially slowed down, except for the purchase of additional lands and new improvements. Faced with the problem of $750,000 in past-due interest, the committee admitted that the depression had been a severe strain on the system. But it concluded: "no losses of consequence are likely to occur."[36]

There was also discussion in Pierre about placing a legal limit on the amount of bonds that the State could issue. The board argued, however, that while it doubted whether more than $60,000,000 should be sold, it was unwise to set an arbitrary figure.[37] In the light of deflated farm values many people believed that $47,500,000 was excessive.

By the latter part of 1924 rumors were widespread that all was not well in the department. When the legislature assembled in January 1925, a resolution was passed providing for an investigation. The investigating committee revealed what some people had known and what others had suspected, namely that officials had been untrue to their public trust, that the department suffered from political chicanery by both factions of the Republican Party, and that the whole system was breaking down.

The investigators received the full cooperation of C. M. Henry, rural credits commissioner, and also that of J. E. Ziebach. But when they attempted to delve into the actions of Ewert, the treasurer, they met persistent and successful opposition. He refused to testify before the committee and to produce certain records. Consequently on February 3 the committee served him with a subpoena demanding the rural credit accounts, many of which were filed at the National Bank of Commerce. The subpoena was temporarily ignored, but when Ewert appeared the next day, he brought only a few miscellaneous records of no value to the committee.[38] On the same afternoon, following his appearance before the committee, Ewert closed the doors of his bank, which held about $400,000 of rural credit funds, thus making the records unavailable to the State officials until a national receiver had been appointed. His actions seemed to substantiate the rather general suspicion that something was wrong in the department. Within a short time the committee made a number of startling disclosures. It first discovered that the rural credit records were most confused. Many of the most important of them, which should have been filed in the rural credits office, were intermingled with Ewert's bank and personal files. It was found that many deposits had been made in banks uncertified by the board and that Ewert consistently kept more rural credit money in his own bank than was allowed by law. Furthermore, the committee revealed that Zoske had manipulated funds for personal advantage and for the benefit of his bank at Draper.

Another interesting disclosure showed that approximately 75 percent of the loans had been made to liquidate indebtedness and that 40 percent of the money lent had gone to pay notes and mortgages held by banks. With bankers administering the law locally, no doubt much of this had gone to redeem their bad farm paper. While there were sufficient paper assets to pay the bonded indebtedness of $47,500,000, it was apparent that much of this future income would fail to materialize and that the taxpayers must aid in the final liquidation. A total of 12,116 loans had been made and about one-third of them, or 4,300, were in default as to interest or principal. Of this number 465 had been foreclosed or were in the process. Furthermore, it was found that $792,722.54 was in closed banks, with about one-half in the National Bank of Commerce.

After surveying these facts, the committee recommended the cessation of loans and the appointment of an interim commission to complete the investigation. It stated that there was no proof of defalcation or embezzlement but that

[35] Sioux Falls *Press*, Jan. 11, Feb. 1, 1923.

[36] See the committee's report in the South Dakota Senate, *Journal*, 1923, p. 59.

[37] Rural Credit Board, *Report*, 1924, p. 7.

[38] "Report of the Select Legislative Committee," South Dakota House, *Journal*, 1925, 783.

rural credit monies had been handled in a "most questionable" manner. Finally, the legislators suggested that perhaps Ewert had used the power which accompanied disbursement of rural credit monies to further his own political position and the political interest of those to whom he was responsible. Obviously this referred to Senators Norbeck and McMaster and the so-called progressive Republicans. The committee, however, admitted that it could not prove this contention.[39]

The legislature immediately enacted a law prohibiting additional loans. No more rural credit bonds could be sold except for the purpose of paying outstanding indebtedness. Provisions were made whereby land acquired by the State through foreclosure could be sold or leased, and the State treasurer was designated to receive rural credit funds.[40] This directed the board to liquidate, thus putting South Dakota out of the money-lending business after about six and one-half years of operation. An interim commission was appointed to carry out a more extensive investigation.

The investigation and what followed cannot be fully understood without some familiarity with local political conditions in South Dakota. The Republicans were sharply divided between the so-called Norbeck or progressive faction and the more conservative members of the party. The division was accentuated in 1924 when Governor McMaster, with Senator Norbeck's help, successfully opposed Thomas Sterling's re-election to the United States Senate. At the same time, however, a Sterling supporter, Carl Gunderson was elected governor. Gunderson, therefore, was not averse to causing as much political embarrassment as possible for Norbeck and McMaster and their friends. Revelation of irregularities in the rural credit department would offer such an opportunity. In addition, of course, some citizens genuinely opposed the system, and had done so from its inception, because it was a case of "the state in business." T. M. Bailey, chairman of the investigating committee, represented this group.

The department unfortunately became the center of a factional political fight. The political enemies of Norbeck and McMaster attempted to capitalize on the unsatisfactory conditions, and the two United States Senators fought back with vigor, especially Norbeck who was South Dakota's leading political figure. Even before the committee report was made public, ugly rumors of political consequence circulated in Pierre. Harry King, Norbeck's campaign strategist, wrote that a prominent Democrat confidentially informed him that Governor Gunderson was "after" Norbeck and was attempting to "pin something on him."[41] Norbeck insisted that he should not be held responsible for the department's condition since he had left the governor's chair almost five years earlier, at which time everything was reported in good shape. "They cannot involve me in anything wrong," he wrote.[42]

To prove that Norbeck had been unfaithful to his trust while governor, an attempt was made to show that he had used his influence as president of the rural credit board for personal gain. His enemies charged that he had been able to secure loans from various banks in the State because he had favored these with rural credit deposits. For instance, on November 6, 1917, a Huron bank received a rural credit deposit, and on March 1, 1918, Norbeck obtained a $6,000 loan from the same institution. The intimation was that he could not have secured the money without making the State deposit.[43] Bankers, however, denied these charges in sworn statements,[44] and Norbeck wrote: "I don't know about this; if so, it is coincident."[45] The charges seem ridiculous in light of the fact that Norbeck's annual income averaged about $90,000 from 1917 to 1919, and up to that time he always had ample credit.[46]

Norbeck charged that his political enemies were endeavoring to destroy the rural credit system and were using its apparent failure as a means of removing him from the United States Senate. This assertion gathered credence when his op-

[39] *Ibid.*, 718

[40] *South Dakota Session Laws*, 1925, ch. 266.

[41] Harry King to Norbeck, Feb. 21, 1925.

[42] Norbeck to S. X. Way, Feb. 17, 1925.

[43] South Dakota Attorney General, *Report of an Investigation of the Rural Credit Department* . . . (1932), 24. This "political" report by M. Q. Sharpe, attorney general and aspiring politician, is characterized by attacks on Norbeck and McMaster and on the idea of the State in business. It is interesting to note that when Sharpe became governor of South Dakota he became a leading exponent of a Missouri Valley Authority.

[44] See *Daily Capital Journal*, Mar. 4, 1926; and *Evening Huronite*, Mar. 9, 1926.

[45] Norbeck to Harry King, Feb. 20, 1925.

[46] Norbeck's income tax statements, 1917, 1918, 1919, in the Norbeck Manuscripts.

ponents used the rural credits debacle as their chief issue in the senatorial election of 1926. However, Norbeck crushed his opposition and was re-elected.

The Senator continued to favor the system. He sharply rebuked the legislature for abolishing the loan provisions of the act and declared that, when the treasurer failed properly to fulfill his duties, the sensible thing to do was to appoint a new treasurer and not abandon the system.[47] He added that discontinuance of loaning operations was "the hardest blow ever struck by the state legislature against its basic industry."[48] Norbeck argued that a friendly administration was needed to operate the department.

The temptation to exploit the rural credits failure was too great to be resisted by some politicians. On the morning of October 8, 1925, a United States grand jury, impaneled at Pierre, passed a resolution accusing Norbeck and McMaster of "dereliction and malfeasance" of duty in connection with their administration of the department. The resolution stated that both former governors knowingly permitted Ewert to disobey the law. It directed the governor or attorney general to make an investigation to determine whether or not this asserted dereliction of duty constituted "criminal offenses."[49]

Action on this resolution was a very delicate task for either the governor or the attorney general, especially since it involved two United States Senators and when no evidence of criminal offense had been presented. Buell Jones, the attorney general, indicated to members of the jury that Norbeck and McMaster may have used poor business judgment in some instances but that bad judgment was not a criminal offense. Under the circumstances Jones expressed the belief that the resolution was politically inspired and refused to institute a suit. A solution to the rural credits problem could be found in "less gossip and more business," he said.[50] Indications that the resolution was politically inspired appeared when it was reported that the chairman of the jury went home and told his friends that "he was just playing a little politics."[51] Norbeck asserted that it was a "political move" and that he would welcome "further investigation."[52]

The excitement caused by the grand jury action had hardly subsided when another attempt was made to embarrass Norbeck. On November 7, John B. Hanten, rural credit commissioner, wrote to him demanding that he pay the department $377,709.02 that had been deposited illegally or without proper designation in various State banks up to the time he left the governorship. This money had ultimately been lost through bank failures.[53] Norbeck gave this rather naive request no consideration.

Meanwhile, Ewert was indicted on charges of misapplication and embezzlement of rural credit funds amounting to $211,437.59. He was convicted of criminal embezzlement on February 12, 1926 and sentenced to eleven years in the State penitentiary. It was found that he had manipulated rural credit monies through a dummy company for his own personal gain.[54]

The interim commission reported to the legislature in January 1927. It revealed that the total bonded indebtedness was $45,500,000 but that before all the bonds were retired $27,570,586.25 in addition would be due in interest. This meant that $73,070,586.25 was necessary for complete liquidation. With shrinking farm values, it was becoming increasingly apparent that the taxpayers must come to the rescue. The legislature enacted laws making it somewhat easier for the State to dispose of its 373,249 acres of land, and some effort was made to salvage something from the department's assets.

In 1928 the taxpayers were called on to help meet the deficit and a special tax levy provided for about $1,000,000. This started a train of special levies which will ultimately cost South Dakota's taxpayers nearly $57,000,000.[55]

Although the 1925 legislature ordered the rural credit department to follow a vigorous business-like policy, little was done toward realizing on the department's assets during the next six years. By that time it was absolutely necessary to act.

[47] Quoted in *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, Sept. 20, 1925.

[48] Norbeck to John H. Kelley, Sept. 18, 1925.

[49] *Daily Capital Journal*, Oct. 8, 1925.

[50] *Ibid.*, Oct. 12, 1925.

[51] Norbeck to W. J. Bulow, Dec. 12, 1926.

[52] *Daily Capital Journal*, Oct. 9, 1925.

[53] John B. Hanten to Norbeck, Nov. 7, 1926.

[54] "Report of the Interim Commission," South Dakota Senate, *Journal*, 1927, p. 180. Ewert was later pardoned and since he carried a surety bond of $100,000 the State lost only a little over $100,000.

[55] Rural Credit Board, *Report*, 1928, p. 11.

In the fiscal year 1931–32 alone, 463 mortgages were foreclosed. At the same time only ten State farms were sold! The rent collections amounted to $146,627.98 during the same period, and the cost of running the department was about one-third of that amount, while the State's tax bill on this land was nearly $600,000.[56] Furthermore, rural credit farms were in a run-down condition, and in order to obtain tenants an immediate cash outlay was necessary. Over one-half of the department's borrowers were delinquent over one year, and some of them as many as eight years.[57] Acquisition of additional poor-income farms, further delinquency in payments of both interest and principal, and seeming inability to dispose of land at any figure approximating the State's investment were the main problems facing the department. These conditions were aggravated by the severe economic depression of 1932.

In 1931 Governor Warren E. Green appointed W. M. Willy as rural credit director. Willey began a genuine effort to dispose of State land but accomplished little because of the general economic situation.

It was South Dakota's cowboy governor, Tom Berry, who first grappled with this tremendous problem realistically. In his inaugural address in January 1933, he rose above political bickering and declared: "In considering this particular part of our state affairs too much time has been used in the past in the effort to fasten or to escape the blame. That is of no value and my suggestion is that we cease all efforts to place blame and then settle down to the business of calm thinking in the hope of finding a solution for that difficult problem."[58] This was sound advice because again in the campaign of 1932 the rural credits issue played a leading part as Norbeck sought a third term in the Senate.

Berry, like his predecessor, thought that some way must be found to dispose of nearly 1,000,000 acres of State land. He believed liberal credit terms should be provided in order to place the land in private hands so the State could escape the crushing tax bill and maintenance expenses. The new governor advocated a special tax to help meet the department's financial requirements of $6,000,000 a year for the next five years.[59]

The 1933 legislature allocated 2 cents a gallon of the State gasoline tax to pay rural credit bonds and interest. It also provided a liberal land sales policy. Finally, a law was enacted permitting borrowers to refinance their loans at 3 percent. Most of them did this with a further loss to the State. With these laws on the statute books, the State commenced a concentrated land-disposal program.

But both 1933 and 1934 were tremendously difficult years for South Dakota farmers because of devastating drouths and low commodity prices. Land was not selling in any substantial quantities. The State acquired more acres through foreclosure than it could sell even at depression prices and on liberal terms. For the year ending June 30, 1934, only 45,726 acres were sold.

The farm depression proved to be a major obstacle to liquidation. Various special tax levies had to be imposed to maintain the State's credit. All the time the department acquired more land. By 1938 it held 1,749,790 acres, or almost twice the amount owned six years earlier when it earnestly began to dispose of its land. By that time, the State owned 6,677 individual tracts or about half the acreage on which loans originally had been made. But there was one healthy sign. The department made 1,133 foreclosures in 1936, a dry year, but two years later there were only 478. After careful examination, however, the rural credit director reported that "the state sustains a loss in practically every instance where it acquires title to property."[60]

When the legislators assembled in 1939, they were again faced with the rural credits problem. For nearly twenty years this had been one of the thorniest issues with which the lawmakers had to deal. The State held almost 2,000,000 acres, and taxes alone amounted to $1,500,000 a year. The legislature appointed a joint committee to investigate the department and make recommendations. The committee declared that the time for temporizing was over. It urged the board to "make drastic efforts to bring about a full and complete liquidation within [a] five-year period . . . ." The belief was expressed that "only a feeble attempt" had previously been made to liquidate the rural credit department. The

[56] In 1925 the State supreme court ordered the State to pay taxes on its land.

[57] Rural Credit Board, *Report*, 1928, p. 45.

[58] *Tom Berry to the South Dakota Legislature* (a pamphlet, Pierre, 1933), 7.

[59] *Ibid.*

[60] Rural Credit Board, *Report*, 1938, p. 2.

fact that South Dakota's taxpayers already had paid $22,339,543.38 to keep it operating emphasized the seriousness of the situation.[61]

Governor Harlan Bushfield appointed Millard Scott as rural credit director and charged him with disposal of the State's 1,731,711 acres of land in five years. This happened to be an ideal time to launch such a program since land values, so drastically depressed in the middle thirties, were beginning to regain something of their normal value.

Scott went to work with vigor. By the summer of 1939 the State was selling more land than it was acquiring for the first time in the history of the liquidation program.[62] For the most part the land was sold by salaried employees rather than by commission agents, and bona fide farmers, not speculators, were purchasing most of it. The department sold over 1,200 tracts, amounting to 293,456 acres, during the fiscal year 1939–40. This resulted from rising commodity prices making farmers anxious to acquire more property as well as from Scott's ambitious administration. Sales progressed almost on schedule after 1939, and in July 1946 the State held only one tract of rural credit land.[63]

In the 1930s large blocks of rural credit bonds varying from $2,000,000 to $7,000,000 came due annually. At no time could the department's income meet these obligations; thus new bonds had to be issued. These usually drew a much lower interest rate. After Scott became director, he worked out a refunding program providing for final bond payments in 1960. As previously shown, he estimated that the experiment would cost South Dakota's citizens approximately $57,000,000.[64]

Why was this venture such a colossal failure? By far the greatest contributing factor was the deflation following World War I. Between 1917 and 1920 land prices in South Dakota skyrocketed from $54 an acre for average plow land to $90.[65] Four years later good plow land had declined from a high of $108 to $64 an acre. On January 1, 1920, South Dakota's land was valued at $2,231,431,723, and ten years later it had decreased to $1,033,288,321, or less than half.[66] Most of the rural credit loans were made when the price of land was high, and consequently they were seriously inflated. A plan of this type could hardly have been inaugurated at a more inopportune time. In fact, the loaning of over $40,000,000 stimulated land inflation in the State, already running at high tide because of the war.

It soon became clear that many loans were excessive. For instance, in Clay County, considered good plow land, 39 loans averaged $64.81 an acre, or approximately the value of the land after the drop in price. In Jerauld County 226 loans were made, averaging $26.06 an acre. This east-central county is in an area where insufficient rainfall makes crop production uncertain. The department sold its land there for $7.21 an acre![67] These examples could be multiplied at will.

While the history of the rural credits venture clearly indicates that many of the loans were too generous, it is important to remember that local banks operated on much the same basis. The generous lending on farm lands led to an annual bank suspension in South Dakota of 8.11 percent between 1921 and 1929. This was the highest rate of bank failures for any State in the Union.[68] The rural credit department may not have been operated on sound business principles, but local banks were equally guilty. In one case taxpayers suffered the loss and in the other, bank depositors.

Second only to the agricultural depression, the most serious difficulty encountered was the apparent impossibility of separating the system from factional politics. In the first place the easy credit system had been a popular political move for Norbeck and his group in the Republican Party. He used it to strengthen his campaign in both 1918 and 1920. When the system failed it was only natural that the anti-Norbeck crowd attempted to use it as a tool to discredit him. Some officials actually gloried in losses and used this in two major campaigns in an attempt to defeat Norbeck. He, being the father of the

[61] *Ibid.*, 1939, p. 3.

[62] *Ibid.*, 6.

[63] South Dakota Rural Credit Board to the author, July 26, 1946.

[64] Rural Credit Department, *Special Report*, 7.

[65] U. S. Department of Agriculture, *Yearbook*, 1919, 741. Land of approximately similar quality in North Dakota advanced only from $33 to $43 an acre.

[66] U. S. Bureau of the Census, 15th Census, 1930, *Agriculture*, 2(1):1134.

[67] Rural Credit Department, *Special Report*, 6.

[68] C. D. Bremer, *American Bank Failures* (New York, 1925), 55.

system, felt obliged to fight back. He frankly admitted that anyone who fought the rural credit system would have to meet him on the political battlefield.[69] This placed the department in the midst of an intra-party whirlwind, and the taxpayers reaped the results.

There were other political factors which may have had some effect in causing failure. Undoubtedly some loans were made with political implications. While Norbeck was governor, a loan was made to Chet Leedom, a prominent west-river politician and Norbeck supporter. Leedom was engaged in the livestock business at that time, but in 1924 he became McMaster's campaign manager and this caused people to wonder on just what basis the loan had been made.[70] It would be difficult to prove that these so-called "political" loans were more risky than others, but they tended to arouse suspicion and opposition to the system.

It is also certain that rural credit money was deposited with bankers who were politically friendly to the Norbeck and McMaster administrations. Referring to one of these bankers who was given a deposit, Norbeck said: "He is our real friend in that county."[71] But here again there is no evidence that State money was lost simply because it was placed with friends of the system. Banks belonging to the anti-Norbeck faction also closed, wiping out substantial State deposits.

A third reason for the large loss was that until 1931 little effort was made to collect on the department's assets. When the deflation struck in 1921, Governor McMaster publicly declared that as long as he was governor no rural credit mortgage would be foreclosed if the farmer made a determined effort to pay.[72] For all practical purposes, this meant a moratorium on rural credit payments, while at the same time the State had to meet its obligations to bondholders. When Ewert wrote to farmers demanding payment, he often received newspaper clippings in return, showing that Governor McMaster had said farmers would not have to meet their installments that year.[73] With the threat of foreclosure virtually removed, payments almost ceased. While this may have been beneficial to the farmers and to McMaster politically, it spelled disaster for the system. The board itself admitted great leniency in 1922.[74] In individual cases it was necessary and often good business, but to establish it as a general policy meant that many farmers who were able to pay did not do so. There were times when 80 percent of the borrowers were delinquent.[75] The losses entailed by this lax and unbusinesslike policy were stupendous.

McMaster's dilatory action was not corrected by Governor Gunderson or the 1925 legislature. A stronger effort should have been made to dispose of State land. In 1926 the commissioner, C. W. Croes, explained that high delinquency was largely due to the failure of a close check on the borrowers' disposition to pay. It was common during the 1920s for income from rural credit lands to be used for purposes other than payment to the State. Frequently, "local creditors ... year after year absorbed the entire income ... while the loans to the state ... continued to mount yearly."[76]

The legislature in 1925 provided that all lands must be leased for cash. South Dakota tenants, unaccustomed to cash rentals, generally protested, making it often impossible for the department to secure renters. Not until 1927 was it possible to sell rural credit property on reasonable terms, and no adequate field force was created to sell, rent, and make terms until 1931. For example, in 1926 the commissioner made practically no effort to sell State land, and fieldmen complained that he would not even answer their inquiries about the sale of certain property.[77] During much of the 1920s it was difficult to dispose of land, but with competent fieldmen, working under well-written laws, millions of dollars could have been saved. The fact that only forty-eight pieces of State property were sold in 1927-28, a fairly prosperous year, testifies to the truth of these statements. It is very significant to note, however, that in the sale of these forty-eight tracts,

[69] Norbeck to Chet Leedom, Feb. 21, 1927.

[70] Norbeck to Gov. Warren E. Green, Nov. 23, 1930.

[71] Nobeck to C. M. Henry, Dec. 6, 1922.

[72] Fred C. Christopherson, "A State Goes Into Business and Out Again," *Nation's Business*, 17(5):48–50, 177–178 (May 1929).

[73] Norbeck to Warren E. Green, Nov. 23, 1930.

[74] Rural Credit Board, *Report*, 1922, p. 3.

[75] *Ibid.*, 1926, p. 13.

[76] *Ibid.*, 1926, p. 4.

[77] Norbeck to Warren E. Green, Nov. 24, 1930.

the State realized a profit.[78] The retention of foreclosed land added greatly to the State's obligations in taxes, upkeep on property, and expense of a field force.

Another reason the plan failed was because the board made many poor or doubtful loans. When the deflation set in and bankers found themselves burdened with mortgages of uncertain values, they often encouraged their mortgagees to get a rural credit loan. When this was done, the banker secured his money and left the State with a mortgage of questionable value. Consequently, the rural credit department received more than its share of poor loans.[79] In some cases loans were obtained with no thought of repayment. It was virtual sale to the State. As previously shown, as high as 40 percent of the entire number of loans went to pay bank notes and mortgages, and no doubt a substantial percentage represented farm paper of doubtful value. The excessive number of bank failures in South Dakota, however, indicates that the banks did not unload as much bad paper on the department as has sometimes been supposed. In any event, the system's laxness helped create losses and could have been easily corrected by appropriate legislation.

A further weakness was the small margin between the interest paid by the State and that received on farm mortgages. Under the original law it was 0.75 percent and was never greater than 1.1 percent. This was insufficient to build a reserve fund to care for delinquent payments, losses, and department operating expenses. The seriousness of this is apparent when it is recalled that the cash balance held by the department usually varied from $2,000,000 to $3,000,000. These balances, raised by State bonds, drew about 3.5 percent. This meant a constant loss to the State on its cash balance, since the interest rate paid by the State was greater than this amount. The department never operated on an entirely self-sufficient basis.

The use of rural credit funds to bolster tottering banks and to restore the general credit situation was another factor that may have caused some loss. For instance, in December 1921, Ewert transferred $1,500,000 to certain South Dakota banks "for the good of the general credit situation."[80] The money lost in closed banks ultimately amounted to about $850,000, but this is inconsequential in light of the total loss.

Using the department's money to strengthen credit conditions, making loans that may have been politically significant, depositing money with friendly bankers, and Ewert's defalcation actually had slight effect on the final breakdown of the system. These received the greatest attention in the press because they made news and were politically significant. The agricultural depression was not news in South Dakota. This depression, however, plus poor management and political intrigue was largely responsible for the system's failure. Not to be overlooked was the general public's repudiation of the rural credit system. There was a sharp reaction against public ownership, partially because of the widespread popularity of the Harding-Coolidge-Hoover philosophy, but strengthened no doubt by difficulties in the rural credit department. During the 1920s there was little genuine desire to make the plan work. Loss of popular support was a serious blow.

Those who wanted to assist South Dakota agriculture could hardly have chosen a more inopportune time to enter the money-lending business. Their optimistic faith in the State's development and their poor judgment cost dearly. But with a more carefully drawn law, more efficient and statesmanlike administration, and a greater desire to make the plan succeed, the story would probably have been much different. Few enterprises illustrate more clearly the pitfalls to be avoided in State ownership than South Dakota's rural credit system. When the theory which had seemed so plausible failed to work successfully in practice, a large majority of South Dakota's citizens regretted their flirtation with State socialism.

[78] Rural Credit Board, *Report*, 1928, p. 11.

[79] Christopherson, "A State Goes Into Business and Out Again," 178.

[80] A. W. Ewert to Norbeck, Aug. 30, 1921.

THE AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION IN ROYAL GEORGIA, 1752–1775

WILLARD RANGE

Department of Political Science, University of Georgia

When on October 29, 1754 Captain John Reynolds stepped from His Majesty's ship, the *Port Mahon*, to assume his duties as the first royal governor of Georgia, the first of four profound revolutions in Georgia agriculture was already under way.[1] Two years before, the Trustees, who had suckled the colony through twenty years of sickly infancy, had given up in despair. Their "noble experiment" to recreate in the New World a paternalistic semifeudal agricultural system had failed miserably. Their colonists had refused to tolerate it. Three of every five settlers had moved away or been gathered to the shades of their ancestors and not replaced by newcomers.

Indeed, it was a wretched colony that greeted Reynolds. Abandoned farms dotted rivers and creeks and the unconquered reaches of the forests. Dilapidated fences and decayed huts were visible symbols of defeated effort. Only the year before, in 1753, a fairly exact census had uncovered but 2,381 of the more than 5,000 white men, women, and children who had sought refuge or riches in this land once hailed as a potential garden of Eden.[2]

But the inevitable reorganization of agriculture in the young colony had begun at last. The lifting of the ban against Negro slavery in 1749 by the hesitant Trustees themselves was already ushering in a new order of labor, in fact, a new social and economic structure destined to weave a new pattern of life and thought in the coming era. The final abolition in 1750 of all restrictions to the buying, selling, and mortgaging of land prepared the way for new land policies that allowed the unfolding of the capitalistic plantation system and the settling of the back country. And equally important, the acceptance of rice and indigo gave farmers in Georgia the first staple crops that allowed them to take their place in the swiftly growing system of commercial agriculture.

Thus three new developments—slavery, unrestricted land, and staple crops—were the pillars that supported agricultural reorganization in royal Georgia. They were more than facts. They were forces, impelling forces that in the twenty-odd years that followed multiplied the population of Georgia tenfold, abolished for all time the old labor system of indentured servants, drove back the red man to triple the settled area of land, powered and speeded the wheels of commercial activity, and planted the seeds of sectionalism and democracy, in fact, generated a new type of social order in a virgin area that became known as the back country.

Out of these three forces—slavery, unrestricted land, and staple crops developed in the royal period—the roots of Georgia civilization sprung. Here was the real birth of Georgia. The Trustee era had passed away as nothing, leaving hardly a mark of influence on life to come. Of course, the written records of the Trustee period are interesting to students of history. The whole affair was an intriguing social and economic experiment. But that is all. It left no more permanent mark than footprints on a seashore. Thus it is to the reorganization of agriculture during the royal period that we must turn for an understanding of the origins of Georgia civilization.

The reorganization of farm labor in Georgia by the introduction of Negro slavery in 1749 was more than the result of a determined campaign by discontented settlers in the colony. It came also from the new mid-century desire in Europe to

[1] Georgia has experienced a major agricultural reorganization profound enough to change patterns of rural life and thought about every two generations. The second major reorganization came with the rise of cotton, the third with the Civil War and Reconstruction, and the fourth with the depression of 1929 and the New Deal. These four over-all patterns were affected, of course, by many forces such as wars, mechanical inventions, the agrarian revolt at the end of the nineteenth century, and so on, but the changes resulting therefrom were really only minor adjustments within the larger and more lasting framework.

[2] *The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia*, 26:415–416 (Atlanta, 1916).

prevent the wholesale emigration of workers who were becoming ever more necessary in the expanding wheels of European industry and trade. Naturally, this caused the flow of white servants which had never been more than a trickle at best to dry up. As Dr. L. C. Gray pointed out, the indentured servant system was only a makeshift designed almost purely for primitive colonization before the less expensive system of black servitude proved itself. Thus, from both sides of the Atlantic, forces were strangling the indenture system. White servants had always been too costly in Georgia anyway. They were not satisfied with the bare subsistence that could be foisted on the Negro. Their women were not submissive to field work. They did not produce children of market value. Just when they became useful and well-trained their term of service ended. And as settlement spread westward and traders found it more necessary to go farther inland to find buyers for their servants, the system became downright exorbitant.[3] Thus the reorganization of farm labor was forced as well as desired, and the competition with other colonies could no longer be ignored.

Yet during the first two years after the ban on slavery was lifted in 1749, nothing seemed to happen. According to the early historian, William DeBrahm, no more than three dozen Negroes could be found in Georgia in 1751. Then suddenly in 1752, with the final assurance that the colony was going back to the crown and the fantastic and utopian dreams of the Trustees were to be heard of no more, the labor revolution began to move with astounding rapidity. The trek of slaveholding planters from South Carolina swelled into a minor pilgrimage. During 1752, the first year of royal control, more than a thousand Negroes were shuttled across the Savannah River.[4] The census of 1753 revealed that one-third of the population of Georgia was black, 1,066 slaves being counted, not including the 536 then being moved into the newly founded Puritan settlement at Midway.[5] By the time Governor James Wright arrived in 1760, the proportion of blacks to whites was the same, but the number of slaves had trebled to 3,578.[6] Within another fifteen years, on the eve of the American Revolution, no less than 15,000, or 42 percent, of a total population of 33,000 people were laboring under the curse of Ham.

The change was phenomenal. The utter lack of farm labor during the Trustee period had been one of the chief causes of the failure of its agriculture, but now during the short space of two decades Georgia agriculture acquired a supply of labor adequate in numbers at least to the demands of a commercial agriculture.

It was natural that in the wake of this swelling column of black labor should come the inevitable realignment of social and economic classes into nonslaveholders, and small, medium, and large masters. For Georgia, the period marked the beginning of the creation of the three main types of agricultural units that Professor Ulrich B. Phillips classified as dominating the South for many decades. The royal period, for instance, saw the rise in Georgia of the capitalistic plantation in the tidewater area, answering the world demand for cheap raw staples, stocked with a large force of permanent labor, operating in routine under industrial-like supervision, and devoted primarily to production for a commercial market. Second, the small farm also developed, worked by a few slaves or hired help, managed by a working owner, and concerned only partly with commercial crops. And third, there was the frontier farm centered primarily west of the pine barrens, worked by a family without slaves, hunting and trading between crops, and designed only for the production of family necesssities.[7] Without the reorganization of the labor supply, obviously, the first two types of units could not have developed, as the Trustee era proved.

The actual number of each different type of agricultural unit developed as a result of these changed labor conditions is still a historical mystery. In fact, the actual proportion of farmers who became slaveholders is equally unknown. Yet it is safe to say that almost no slaves were to be found more than 20 miles from the coast and even fewer miles from the Savannah River.

The influx of laborers, however, made it possible

[3] L. C. Gray, "Economic Efficiency and Competitive Advantages of Slavery under the Plantation System," *Agricultural History*, 4:32–33, 41 (April 1930).

[4] Charles C. Jones, "The Dead Towns of Georgia," Georgia Historical Society, *Collections*, 4:150 (Savannah, 1878).

[5] *The Colonial Records . . . of Georgia*, 26:415–416.

[6] William Harden, *History of Savannah and South Georgia* (Chicago, 1913), 1:145.

[7] Ulrich B. Phillips, *Plantation and Frontier Documents: 1649–1863* (Cleveland, 1909), 1:71–73.

for the Georgia lowlands to quickly assume the complexion of the South Carolina lowlands in which there were very few planters without slaves. Settlers left over from the Trustee period who were too poor to buy slaves either became town workers or pushed across the pine barrens to join the backwoodsmen of the Piedmont.[8]

That the average slave plantation in the tidewater region soon became rather large, possessing perhaps 20 to 30 slaves by the end of the period, is evident from the following data on the number of slaves owned by the persons who received land grants from the governor's council during the four years, 1755–1758: 103 owned 1 to 6 slaves; 47 owned 6 to 10; 44 owned 11 to 20; 20 owned 21 to 30; 13 owned 31 to 40; 3 owned 41 to 50; and 12 owned over 50.[9]

The data show that more than half the masters receiving grants in those years were small masters, owning 10 or fewer Negroes. But it must be remembered that the years 1755–1758 marked only the beginning of a thriving slave trade in the colony and as the years went by many of these planters extended their possessions. In the second place, it is unlikely that many planters owned their full working force of slaves at the time they took out their grants. Since prosperity settled over the rice fields of the coast after the peace of 1763, it is safe to believe that many of the small owners added to their slaves until their working gangs constituted a much larger number.

It is significant that even in these early years, 1755–1758, nearly 40 percent of the grantees who owned slaves already possessed more than 10. It is noteworthy also that about 6 percent of them already owned 50 or more and belonged to the lofty hierarchy of wealthy aristocratic lords of great households. Jonathan Bryan and William Butler each owned nearly 90 slaves. Joseph Gibbons, Patrick Mackay, James DeVeaux, Elisha Butler, and a few others were likewise already operating on a large scale in those years. As early as 1759 James Maxwell and his son owned 114 Negroes. That slave owners increased their work gangs during these years is evident from the fact that, by the eve of the American Revolution, James Habersham, though not particularly interested in planting, owned 198 slaves and Governor James Wright possessed no fewer than 523.[10]

Thus it was no wonder, with this vast influx of black workers, that the entire agricultural and commercial structure of Georgia was revolutionized. Nothing like it had ever existed under the Trustees. Only a handful of planters had actually worked as many as 10 white servants. Almost none had more. The majority who had indentured servants at all rarely had more than 2 or 3 at a time. Now for the first time Georgia had a labor supply that permitted extensive operations, and it was possible to open large farms and grow staples in sufficient quantities to enter commercial markets.

Hand in hand with the reorganization of agricultural labor in Georgia came the reorganization of the colony's crops. Although hope sprang eternal for the development of silk and bounties for it were continued, the 20-year Trustee period of phantom chasing for exotic luxury staples came to an end. The Salzburgers took silk unto themselves as their special province, but grapes and the countless array of tropical herbs and plants dear to the hearts of the Trustees were practically forgotten.

Rice became queen of the seacoast. For more than half a century, South Carolina had tried the hardy grain and found it good. Carolina planters who migrated to Georgia brought with them their enthusiasm for the crop. The Puritans who moved into Midway grew practically nothing else for market.[11] Governor Wright, himself a South Carolinian familiar with rice, coming in 1760 saw quickly the value of tidewater swamps and forthwith set his colonists a brilliant example as a planter and promoter of this lucrative staple. Although Georgia developed slowly as a competitor to South Carolina, she exported 2,996 barrels of rice in 1756 and 7,500 barrels in 1763. From then on, with the Spanish menace removed from Florida, production mounted until by 1775 about 25,000 barrels were shipped yearly from the Savannah harbor.[12]

[8] *Ibid.*, 1:84.

[9] Compiled from the "Proceedings and Minutes of the Governor's Council" in volume 7 (1906) of *The Colonial Records . . . of Georgia*. As many grantees did not actually settle land granted to them, these data give only an approximate picture of the proportions of small, medium, and large masters.

[10] *The Colonial Records . . . of Georgia*, 8:45(1907); Georgia Historical Society, *Collections*, 6:6 (1904).

[11] Jones, "The Dead Towns of Georgia," 152.

[12] Hugh McCall, *The History of Georgia* (Atlanta, 1909), 174, 209; L. C. Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860* (Washington, 1933),

Second in importance to rice of the newly adopted crops in the tidewater area was indigo, grown by planters with surplus acres of high ground. Through the initiative of young Eliza Lucas, it attained the rank of a staple in South Carolina only about 1745. By 1751 Henry Younge had seen fit to try it in Georgia. From then on it developed quickly as a secondary staple, supported by British trade and bounties until the Revolution, averaging well over 9,000 pounds in exports annually for many years.[13]

As the advance guard of Virginians appeared in the upcountry after the Indian cession of 1763, a third foreign crop—tobacco—augmented the current of the agricultural revolution. Its heyday was not to come until after the din of the Revolution had become an echo, but 176,732 pounds of the golden leaf were produced in 1772, and a year later it was honored with a place in the governor's list of staples.

Meanwhile the upcountry was promoting the old products of the Trustee period which had never before developed into significant commercial value. There livestock became the basis of the frontier economy. On the upper Ogeechee and Savannah rivers and below the Altamaha River after 1763 great herds of cattle and hogs ranged under the long whips of "cracker" herdsmen. By 1757 cattlemen crowded from Carolina swam huge batches of 300 to 1,500 head across the Savannah. To the south, superannuated slaves cared for herds of 1,000 head and more. Meat was barreled and shipped to Europe and the West Indies. Indeed, between 1756 and 1772, the number of hogs and shoats exported ranged usually from about 300 to 1,300 per year; while pork and beef averaged 1,000 barrels annually after 1763. Even the export of horses jumped from a few head in the 1750s to 345 in 1770.[14]

Corn also, which the colonists had been hard pressed to supply for themselves during the Trustee period, became a commercial crop of ever expanding proportions. Its export increased from 600 bushels in 1755 to 11,444 bushels in 1772. In 1769 a peak export of 21,896 bushels of corn was reached.[15] "Pease" likewise, according to Governor Wright's report of 1773, was another crop promoted to the rank of a staple.[16] And, of course, lumber and naval stores, products which had just begun to show a profit in the final years of the Trustee era, soared with amazing speed once the privateers of France and Spain were driven from the high seas. Timber exports alone skyrocketed from approximately 387,000 board feet in 1755 to 2,163,000 board feet in 1772.[17]

The extent to which the production of these staple crops seized the imagination of farmers during the royal period is evident from two factors. First, aside from the back country, there was little effort to develop self-sufficiency. Onions, butter, cheese, fruit, some flour, and the like dietary necessities continued to be imported during this prosperous era even as in the days of decrepit agriculture under the Trustees. Second, the soaring figures on exports, especially after 1763, showed that production for a commercial market had become the dominating objective. Although allowance must be made for the fact that certain products from South Carolina were shipped out via the port of Savannah, the sevenfold increase in the value of exports between 1761 and 1772 was probably largely the result of the agricultural revolution in Georgia alone.

At any rate, there is no doubt that during the short space of two decades in the royal period Georgia agriculture cast aside the idealistic schemes of the Trustees and by means of Negro labor and well-tried staples adopted from other colonies, assumed the characteristics of a commercial agriculture destined to dominate it for generations.

The reorganization of the land program was more gradual. In fact, slowly over the years beginning as early as 1734, the Trustees had relaxed their utopian restrictions on landholding until in 1750 their whole impracticable scheme was overthrown. From then on restrictions on the buying, selling, and mortgaging of land were but little more rigorous than in other colonies. With this new freedom, the decade of the 1750s became marked with a wholesale granting of lands. Many settlers who never before had been planters, from carpen-

1:289. It is likely that some of the last figure came from South Carolina through Savannah, but Georgia probably produced the bulk of it.

[13] McCall, *The History of Georgia*, 174, 209.

[14] Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States*, 1:102, 148–150.

[15] *Ibid.*, 1:102.

[16] Georgia Historical Society, *Collections*, 3:166 (1873).

[17] Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States*, 1:102.

ter's apprentices to merchants, secured tracts to set themselves up in the fashion of farmers. Old-time landholders possessing from 50 to 500 acres received additional grants of 200 acres and more, depending on the size of their families and working force. Small farmers who had worn out their land received new and larger tracts. Widows and even spinsters invaded the domain of the slave masters with grants of 100 to 500 acres. Planters who appealed for timber were favored with additional tracts.

Whole new settlements began to appear, largely as the result of a small influx of farmers who had worn out their land or been crowded out by large planters in other colonies. The grant of 31,950 acres in 1752 for the establishment of the Puritans at Midway was to become the most prosperous and permanent of these new ventures. In 1754 a premature settlement of Quakers was created on a site later to become Wrightsborough. In 1758 the port of Sunbury was settled. A year later a large tract on the Altamaha River was set aside for about a hundred South Carolina planters who promised to make their appearance within a year.[18]

At the turn of the decade of the 1750s even the old 5-acre and 44-acre garden and farm lots circling Savannah were in demand, the small lots selling for 10 to 40 shillings and the larger ones for £5 to £8.[19] Surely the spirit of the agricultural revolution was gathering force and enthusiasm for planting was being reinvigorated.

The delight with which the governor's council encouraged this flurry of land acquisition is manifest in the size of grants made to 574 petitioners during the four years, 1755–1758. Thirty-six grantees received under 100 acres each; 429, from 100 to 450 acres; 87, from 500 to 950 acres; and 22, 1,000 to 2,500 acres.[20]

The full significance of these figures can be realized only when one remembers that many of these grants were merely additions to tracts already acquired. And more were yet to come. In these years, 73 percent of the grantees received plots of 100 to 450 acres in size. There was practically no demand for the Trustees' favorite unit of 50 acres. With such tiny patches the newcomers had no patience.

In fact, with the agriculture of Georgia revived with new blood, there was little patience with any vestiges of Trustee paternalism. When Governor Reynolds arrived with royal instructions to insist that farmers clear and cultivate 5 acres per year of every 100 granted, the colonial assembly quickly let it be known that such restrictions were not acceptable and the demand was promptly canceled. Instructions arriving in November 1755 asked that no more than 3 of 50 acres be cleared and planted within 3 years or that a small stock of animals (3 cattle or 6 sheep or goats) be placed on it if it was barren.[21]

Of course, the granting of land outran actual settling and planting. Governor Reynolds was forced to complain that although many grants had been approved during his first 18 months in office, only 84 had actually been taken out. To forestall the passing of too much land to rapacious absentees, probably hungering for speculative opportunities, grantees henceforth were required to take out their grants within 7 months and register them within 6 months, take an oath of their intentions to cultivate, or give sufficient security against the day of their arrival. For how else could His Benevolent Majesty be sure of the quitrents due him?[22] Nevertheless, it cannot be doubted that the availability of free land was part of the impetus that helped the population of Georgia to more than double in the years from 1753 to 1760.

Yet until 1763, the full force of the agricultural revolution was being thwarted. Indians still held most of the fertile land of Georgia, confining the white man to two narrow strips along the seaboard and the Savannah River—too much of which was barren land. Worse still, the clouds of the French and Indian War darkened the future. The menacing force of Spain was still in Florida. The French and their Indian allies threatened the 600-mile thinly fortified frontier to the west. In the face of these obstacles the interior could not be opened.

Once the Spaniards and French had been trounced by British arms and removed from the borders of Georgia by the peace of 1763, the distribution of new land swelled to revolutionary proportions. Then the Indians were easy to deal with. Their cession of 1763 opened land to the west of the pine-barren barricade as well as land between the Altamaha and Saint Marys rivers. Fresh land at moderate prices and plenty of good range for

[18] *The Colonial Records . . . of Georgia*, 8:46.

[19] *Ibid.*, 8:550–551, 584, 590, 643–645.

[20] Compiled from the "Proceedings and Minutes of the Governor's Council" in volume 7 of *The Colonial Records . . . of Georgia*.

[21] *Ibid.*, 7:295–298, 13:31–32(1907).

[22] *Ibid.*, 7:102, 337–338.

cattle, horses, and hogs were said by Governor Wright to be the chief attractions for the horde of settlers who scurried over the Savannah River.[23] To the faithful soldiers who served the king in his recent war went grants of land free of taxes for 10 years—from 2,000 to 5,000 acres to officers, 200 acres to non-commissioned officers, and 50 acres to humble privates.[24] To encourage new settlements, the assembly in 1766 offered a whole township complete with a public road leading to it and free taxes to groups of 40 or more families.[25] In 1768 both Wrightsborough and Queensbury were given life by bands of Quakers and Scotch-Irish respectively.

Unfortunately the 2,100,000-acre Indian cession of 1773 was followed too soon by the awful holocaust of civil war to be of great consequence to the agricultural revolution. True enough, this "New Purchase" was opened by Governor Wright with magnificent optimism, a new policy of selling the land rather than giving it free was established, a land court was opened at Augusta, and a few settlers trickled into the valley of the Broad River. But an outbreak of renegade Creeks in 1774 blasted the plan momentarily, and before it could be reshaped the royal government of Georgia had fled for its life.[26]

Nevertheless, even before the cession of 1773 the land policy of Georgia had gone through a complete somersault since the idealistic era of the Trustees. The fashionable European custom of concentrating great tracts of land in a few hands was moving at a rollicking pace. Although Lieutenant Governor John Graham with his 26,000 acres, including the elaborate river-bottom plantation of Mulberry Grove complete with mansion, gardens, and outbuildings for poultry, pigeons, coaches, horses, meats, and kitchen worth in all perhaps £50,000, was an exception, nevertheless the devouring appetite for large holdings was well nigh universal.[27] Even as early as 1759 William Butler had acquired 2,800 acres while a year later Jonathan Bryan held grants to 5,250 acres.[28] And there were many others of equal proportion. Even the humble Salzburgers branched out as the years rolled by. As early as 1757 Theobald Keiffer, an ex-indentured servant, was master of 600 acres and the owner of slaves; by 1769 John Adam Treutlen, later governor of the State, had gathered into his hands 1,300 acres and 23 Negroes.[29]

It is quite probable that the average plantation of 1773 was as large as the average plantation in Georgia at the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. The governor's report of 1773 declared that in the nearly 7,000,000 acres within the Indian boundary there were 1,400 settlements or plantations. Within these, 120,000 acres, or about 86 acres per plantation, were improved. Since it is hardly likely that more than one-fifth of any landowner's holdings were improved, the average plantation probably spread over between 400 and 500 acres.[30] Definitely the capitalistic commercial plantation system had unfolded.

Once these three developments—slavery, staple crops, and unrestricted land—had turned out the old order of the Trustees and taken root, the main pattern of Georgia agriculture became fairly permanent. True enough, the Georgia farmer was knocked flat on his back, financially as well as physically, during the American Revolution, but the general pattern of agriculture—the main crops, the methods of cultivation and use of labor, the methods of land distribution, and the structure of commercial activity—all changed but little until the turn of the century. By then, however, the cohorts of King Cotton were organizing for revolt.

[23] Harden, *History of Savannah and South Georgia*, 165–166.

[24] McCall, *The History of Georgia*, 199.

[25] *The Colonial Records . . . of Georgia*, 18:743–748 (1910).

[26] McCall, *The History of Georgia*, 260–261; William Bacon Stevens, *A History of Georgia* (Philadelphia, 1859), 2:83.

[27] Lucian Lamar Knight, *Georgia's Landmarks, Memorials and Legends* (Atlanta, 1913), 1:108–109.

[28] *The Colonial Records . . . of Georgia*, 8:146, 318–319.

[29] Hester Walton Newton, "The Agricultural Activities of the Salzburgers in Colonial Georgia," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 18:260–261 (1934).

[30] Georgia Historical Society, *Collections*, 3:160. According to the United States census for 1860 the average farm consisted of 430 acres of which only 130 were improved. Even in 1940, two centuries after the royal period, the United States census showed only one-third the farm land in Georgia as improved. Georgia historians have often calculated the plantation of the royal period as being small, doubtless because they did not consider the word "improved" in Governor Wright's report. During the Trustee period it is quite likely that less than one-tenth of the land granted was improved. So the estimate of one-fifth for the royal period is very conservative.

NEWS NOTES AND COMMENTS

ACTIVITIES OF MEMBERS

Professor Robert G. Dunbar of Colorado A. and M. College has recently located a complete set (lacking volume 2) of *Field and Farm* for his college library. This periodical was published by Lute Wilcox in Denver from 1886 to 1920.

Professor David M. Ellis of Hamilton College has received the John H. Dunning Award of the American Historical Association for 1946 for his study, *Landlords and Farmers in the Hudson-Mohawk Region, 1790–1850* (Ithaca, N. Y., Cornell University Press, 1946).

Professor Walter M. Kollmorgen of the University of Kansas and Mr. Robert W. Harrison have recently completed two studies of drainage reclamation in the coastal marshlands of the Mississippi River Delta and a similar study of the Arkansas-Red Rivers segment of the alluvial Mississippi Valley.

Professor James C. Malin of the University of Kansas has issued privately a volume entitled *Essays on Historiography* (Lawrence, Kansas, 1946, 188 p., $2.50). It consists of essays on "The Turner-Mackinder Space Concept of History," "N. S. Shaler on the Frontier Concept and the Grassland," "Science and Social Theory," and "Certainty and History," and a bibliography. The first of these essays is a further development of the Turner-Mackinder theme which Professor Malin presented under the title, "Space and History," in *Agricultural History*, April, July 1944. Professor Malin's three articles on dust storms that appeared in the *Kansas Historical Quarterly* for May, August, and November 1946 have been reprinted as a 71-page booklet, *Dust Storms, 1850–1900* (Topeka, 1946).

Professor Louis Bernard Schmidt of Iowa State College has issued a revised edition of his *Topical Studies and References on the Farmers' Movement in the United States, 1650–1946*. This guide was prepared primarily for use in Professor Schmidt's course on the subject which is offered to seniors and graduate students.

Mr. W. E. Tate, F. R. Hist. S., currently at All Souls, Oxford, is continuing his study of the English enclosure acts and awards. The latest in his extensive series are "Enclosure Acts and Awards Relating to Derbyshire," in the Derbyshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, *Journal*, 1944–45, pages 1–65, and *A Hand-List of Buckinghamshire Enclosure Acts and Awards* (Aylesbury, Bucks County Council, 1946).

Professor J. Allen Tower of Birmingham-Southern College is analyzing the census data with regard to agricultural trends in Alabama and the South to ascertain what has happened to cotton localization and what replacements have come in.

Dr. Mildred Throne has accepted a position in the department of history of Washburn Municipal University at Topeka, Kansas.

Dr. Frans Verdoorn, editor of *Chronica Botanica*, Waltham, Massachusetts, was awarded the first Mary Soper Pope Medal of the Cranbrook Institute of Science, Michigan, on December 12, 1946, in recognition of his editorial and international relations work in biology as well as his researches in cryptogamic botany and the history of the plant sciences.

BRAND CREATES FELLOWSHIP

Mr. Charles J. Brand, president of the Agricultural History Society during 1945–46, has established the Conway MacMillan Memorial Research Fellowship in Botany at the University of Minnesota. It is his purpose to honor the life, leadership, and scientific work of his beloved teacher, Professor Conway MacMillan, who was a member of the department of botany at the University of Minnesota from 1887 to 1906. The fellowship carries an annual stipend of approximately $1,200 and may be granted to a graduate student in furtherance of research in the field of botany broadly interpreted.

FOREST PRODUCTS HISTORY FOUNDATION

The Forest Products History Foundation of the Minnesota Historical Society is compiling a list of manuscript collections dealing with forest products industries. The staff is, therefore, interested in securing information on the unpublished letters, diaries, recollections, memoirs, and accounts or business papers of individuals and the business records of firms concerned with forest products. Not only logging and lumbering but the utilization of wood in the making of shingles, barrels, furniture, etc., are included. From time to time, the Foundation plans to circulate the list of manuscript materials to interested institutions and scholars with a view to facilitating research on the subject.

RURAL HANDICRAFTS

The U. S. Department of Agriculture in cooperation with the Russell Sage Foundation has recently issued a profusely illustrated 40-page pamphlet on *Rural Handicrafts in the United States*. The introduction is by M. L. Wilson. Part 1, The Place of Handicrafts in Rural Life, is by Allen Eaton of the Russell Sage Foundation. Part 2, A Country-wide Study of the Arts and Handicrafts of Our Rural People, is by Lucinda Crile of the Extension Service. The pamphlet is *Miscellaneous Publication 610* and is available from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington 25, D. C., at 20 cents per copy.